

JANE AUSTEN : A RE-ASSESSMENT



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Research Guide

Dr. V.N.PANDEY
(M.A. Ph.D.)

**Retd. Prof. of B.K.D. College,
JHANSI (U.P.)**

Research Scholar

LATA TRIPATHI

**Bundelkhand College
JHANSI**

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C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that Km. Lata Tripathi has fulfilled all the conditions laid by the University for submitting the thesis. She has worked under me for more than three years continuously.

The whole work is a piece of research characterized by fresh interpretation of facts available. The thesis is the outcome of candidate's own reading. It is marked for the critical insight and just gives completely a radical view of her works in its form.

To my mind the thesis is suitable for publication.

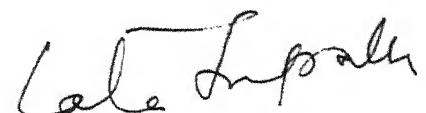
I wish her all success.


V.N.PANDEY

M.A.Ph.D.,
Retired Senior Lecturer
in English
Bundelkhand College, Jhansi

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C H A P T E R - I

JANE AUSTEN : A RE-ASSESSMENT

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

(a) A Review of Critical Approaches :Of all English novelists Jane Austen is the only one who has had a uniformity of appeal to readers and critics of all ages. The changing critical tastes with the succeeding romantic movement and the victorian search for balance followed by the complexity of literary trends in the twentieth century seem to have made no difference to the admiration in which she has been held by readers and critics alike.

The earliest critical approach to Jane Austen's novels was that of her greater contemporary Sir Walter Scott. His approach was directly to the finesse and meticulousness of her workmanship. Scott's approbation established Jane Austen as an artist working on a limit canvas. His words marked a long critical tradition :

"That young lady had a talent for describing the involvement and feelings and characters of ordinary life which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with. The Big Bow-Wow strain I can do myself like any now going, but the exquisite touch which renders ordinary common place things and characters interesting from the truth of the description and the sentiment is denied to me".

The association of 'ordinary' and 'commonplace' with Jane Austen's 'talent' is significant. What is implied is also her capacity of observation and psychological analysis coupled with her descriptive powers. In short the compliment helps to establish her as possessing the salient qualities of a novelist. At the same time the idea of her being some what average in the choice of her subject-matter is also suggested although it is treated as the very basis of her excellence.

Scott's is the first authentic estimate and it puts

in a nutshell most of the excellences of Jane Austen as a novelist. It can be called a romantic artist's patronizing appraisal of a neo-classical writer whom he knows to lack in genius and power but wants to do justice to her by bringing out her good points however 'ordinary'.

There is such an element of truth in Scott's approach that, down to this day, it is customary to quote his tribute. There is nothing delimiting in it, except by implication and contrast. It is only by adding something more discovered by subsequent critics that we can arrive at the whole truth about her.

After Scott's comment, comes the personal appraisal by Henry Austen, her brother. In spite of the desire for unmixed praise he is objective enough to point out some qualities which underline her real achievement and has been repeatedly acknowledged to be her chief merit. He refers to her ironic and satirical vision although he over emphasizes her tolerance:

"Though the frailties, foibles, and follies of others could not escape her immediate detection, yet even on their vices did she never trust herself to comment with unkindness".

Regarding another important aspect of her creative genius, Henry Austen says:

"Her power of inventing characters seems to have been intuitive, and almost unlimited. She drew from nature; but, whatever may have been surmised to the contrary, never from individuals."

This approach seeking to suggest both her satirical and natural genius, bases its conclusions on the vein of natural insight, creativity and sympathy which we associate with Shakespeare - opening up an unlimited prospect of further exploration.

It is interesting to note that this aspect of Jane Austen's art was being explored exactly at the time when Keats - another artist in another medium whose identity with Shakespeare has been emphasized - was writing his Odes. Richard Whately, a critic of neo-classical temperament, refers to moral lessons to be derived from her novels and to the correctness of her fables. But he also compares her to Shakespeare in the delineation of her comic characters each of whom he makes out to be original types:

"Slender and Shallow, and Aguecheek, as Shakespeare has painted them, though equally fools, resemble one another no more than Richard, and Macbeth, and Julius Caesar; and Miss Austin's Mrs Bennet, Mr Rushworth, and Miss Bates, are no more alike than her Darcy, Knightley, and Edmund Bertram."

A similar and more emphatic approach likening Jane Austen to Shakespeare, was made by Thomas Babington Macaulay in 1843:

"Shakespeare had had neither equal nor second. But among the writers who, in the point which we have noticed, have approached nearest to the manner of the great master, we have no hesitation in placing Jane Austen.... She has given us a multitude of characters, all, in a certain sense commonplace, all such as we meet every day. Yet they are all as perfectly discriminated from each other as if they were the most eccentric of human beings."

This can be considered to be the first stage of the recognition and appreciation of Jane Austen. She has been accorded praise in precisely those fields of excellence which account for her popularity down to this day. These approaches combine the romantic and neo-classical views.

With Charlotte Bronte there is an altogether different kind of approach. A novelist of stature, identifying herself with the romantic school, Charlotte Bronte brought out what Jane Austen lacked.

"Why do you like Miss Austen so very much? I am puzzled on that point..... I got the book ('Pride and Prejudice'). And what did I find ? An accurate daguerreotyped portrait of a commonplace face; a carefully fenced, highly cultivated garden, with neat borders and delicate flowers; but no glance of a bright, vivid physiognomy, no open country, no fresh air, no blue hill, no bonny beck. I should hardly like to live with her ladies and gentlemen....."

In another letter, she allows her the merit which Scott had noticed, but again combines it with a sharp reference to her limitations :

".... there is a Chinese fidelity, a miniature delicacy in the painting : she ruffles her reader by nothing vehement, disturbs him by nothing profound: the Passions are perfectly unknown to her; she rejects even a speaking acquaintance with that stormy sisterhood..... Her business is not half so much with the human heart as with the human eyes..... what throbs fast and full, though hidden, what the blood rushes through, what is the unseen seat of life and the sentient target of death - this Miss Austen ignores."

The extreme view of Charlotte Bronte expecting in Jane Austen's art the heat and turbulence of romantic art served to bring out those elements which made her endure in spite of this deficiency. In other words, it helped to define that province where she is supreme. George Henry Lewes writing in 1859, tried to unravel the complexity of Jane Austen's apparently simple art:

"It is easy for the artist to choose a subject from everyday life, but it is not easy for him so to represent the characters and their actions they shall be at once life-like and interesting..... Miss Austen is like Shakespeare: She makes her very noodles inexhaustibly amusing, yet accurately real,.... In this she has never perhaps been surpassed, not even by Shakespeare himself..... But all her power is dramatic power; she loses her hold on us directly she ceases to speak

through the personae,..... It is probably this same dramatic instinct which makes the construction of her stories so admirable.... Her invention is wholly in character and motive, not in situation..... So entirely dramatic, and so little descriptive, is the genius of Miss Austen."

Lewes, in this balanced approach, touches upon Jane Austen's defects, to explain her limited popularity:

"We are touching here on one of her defects which help to an explanation of her limited popularity, especially when coupled with her deficiencies in poetry and passion. She has little or no sympathy with what is picturesque and passionate. This prevents her from painting what the popular eye can see, and the popular heart can feel."

Lewes further allows that "she never stirs the deeper emotions, that she never fills the soul with a noble aspiration" and concludes that "Her place is among the Immortals; but the pedestal is erected in a quiet niche of the great temple."

Such a critical approach, making a fair assessment of merits and limitations, paves the way for modern estimates. Julia Kavanagh thus stresses both her strength and limitations: She is the first critic to touch upon an aspect of Jane Austen hitherto ignored - the tender and the sad - and evokes the experience of Anne Elliot in Persuasion bringing out the pathos in a love story as against wit and satire associated with the same theme in other novels:

"This melancholy cast, the result, perhaps, of some secret personal disappointment, distinguishes Persuasion from Miss Austen's other tales."

She concludes: "Wonderful, indeed, is the power that out of materials so slender, out of characters so imperfectly marked, could fashion a story. This is her great, her prevailing merit, and yet, it cannot be denied, it is one that injures her with many readers." A very pertinent point

regarding Jane Austen's limitations is made in the following remark:

"The delicate mind that could evolve so shrewdly, foolishness from its deepest recesses, was powerless when strong feelings had to be summoned. They heard her, but did not obey the call."

The approach of this critic does its utmost to incorporate the hitherto unfocussed merits of Jane Austen such as the serious element in her writing.

Mrs. Oliphant writing in 1870 underlined the element of a callous objectivity in the very perfection of Jane Austen's art. She seemed to be lacking in human sympathy:

"She stands by and looks on, and gives a soft half-smile, and tells the story with an exquisite sense of its ridiculous side and fine-stinging yet soft-voiced contempt for the actors in it. She sympathises with the sufferers, yet she can scarcely be said to be sorry for them;

Mrs Oliphant defines the "feminine cynicism" which seems to her to be her distinctive quality:

"It includes a great deal of the amiable, and is full of toleration and patience, and that habit of making allowance for other which lies at the bottom of all human charity. But yet it is not charity and its toleration has none of the sweetness which proceeds from that highest of Christian grace. It is not absolute contempt either, but only a softened tone of general disbelief - amusement nay enjoyment, of all those humours of humanity which are so quaint to look at as soon as you dissociate them from any rigid standards of right or wrong."

This is a new light shed on the idea of geniality and tolerance which is apparently similar to but really different from that of Shakespeare.

So far our idea of Jane Austen's art has been continuously sharpened by elaborations of the romantic and classical views of which we could take Scott and Whately as the examples among earlier critics and Charlotte Bronte and G.H. Lewes among those of the latter part of the century. It is characteristic that the latter set of critics have discovered an identity with a romantic artist like Shakespeare.

So Richard Simpson writing in 1870 displays neo-classical standards and analyses Jane Austen's handling of her fools. Agreeing that in them she has caught the knack of Shakespeare, he goes deeper in defining her concept of folly:

"She seems to have considered folly to consist in two separate qualities: first a thorough weakness either of will or intellect, an emptiness or irrelevancy of thought such as to render it impossible to know what the person would think of any given subject, or how he would act under it; and often, secondly, in addition to this, fixed ideas on a few subjects, giving the whole tone to a person's thoughts so far as he thinks at all..... The fool simple is soon exhausted; but when a collection of fixed ideas is grafted upon him he becomes a theme for endless variations..... There is another class of fools whom Miss Austen treats with special distinction. These people are sometimes acute enough mentally; the meanness is in their moral understanding rather than in their intellect."

It is clear that comprehensive and general approaches have given way to narrower and more analytical approaches to details of the novelist's art and as the twentieth century approaches, we find this trend of mainly concentrating on single aspects - of art or personality. At the same time there are very elaborate studies which, however, examine each aspect in turn so as to exhaust the subject by bringing out much significance as possible.

Thus Henry James, the first considerable critic to write at the turn of the century, concerns himself to explore as to how the visionary strokes fell from an otherwise matter-of-fact novelist:

"The key to Jane Austen's fortune with posterity has been in part the extraordinary grace of her facility, in fact of her unconsciousness: as if, at the most, for difficulty, for embarrassment, she sometimes, over her work basket, her tapestry flowers, in the spare, cool drawing-room of other days, fell amusing, lapsed too metaphorically, as one may say, into wool-gathering, and her dropped stitches, of these pardonable, of these precious moments were afterwards picked up as little touches of human truth, little glimpses of steady vision, little master-strokes of imagination.

Another aspect of Jane Austen which became the subject of exploration and approbation was her quest of truth. She invariably adhered to her direct knowledge and never risked conjecture.

Reginald Farrier, writing in 1917 the anniversary of her death, discovered the secret of her immortality

"in that underlying something which is the woman herself; for of all writers, she it is who pursues truth with most utter and undesirable devotion..... She declines to write of scenes and circumstances that he does not know at first hand..... she is, in fact, the most merciless, though calmest of iconoclasts..... has no passion, preaches no gospel, grinds no axe;..... Everything false and feeble, in fact, withers in the demure greyness of her gaze; she is consumed with passion for the real, as apart from the realistic; and the result is that her creations, are no less obviously generalized into a new identify of their own."

Of Jane Austen's style, Farrier is the first critic to connect it with her temper:

"....the note of her style is the very note of her

nature, in its lovely limpidity, cool and clear and flashing as an alpine stream without ebulliences or turbidness of any kind ".....'rational' is almost her highest workd of praise. Good senseis her be-all and end-all.

As already remarked, the twentieth century critics on Jane Austen have mostly explored and highlighted single aspects in a way not done before.

R.W.Chapman points out exactness of detail as her forte:

The quality of her composition that most stands out as characteristics and remarkable, is her extraordinary attention to exactness of detail. The accuracy in dates only typical of a scrupulous realism in all similar things. She would not allow her niece to take her people from Dawlish to Bath in a day - 'They are nearly 100 miles apart'. Her visitors to Bath are never permitted to go to the theatre on concert night or to dance at the Lower Rooms on a Monday. It appears that the device of the hedgerow, used in 'Persuasion', was though of for 'Mansfield Park'..... because Northamptonshire was 'not a country of hedgerows'. She could not bring herself to use fictitious names for ships of war, and wrote to her brother asking leave to borrow some of his."

Another characteristic approach made to the art of Jane Austen was by pin-pointing the role of character and action in the dramatic novel of Jane Austen. Edwin Muir analyses this important aspect of her art and it is a pioneering approach which anticipates several other such studies of character and action with reference to other artists:

".....the first novelist who practised (the dramatic novel) with consummate success in England - Jane Austen - consistently avoided and probably was quite incapable of sounding the tragic note. There is in her novels, in the first place, a confinement to one circle, one complex of

life, producing naturally an intensification of action and this intensification is one of the essential attributes of the dramatic novel. In the second place, character is to her no longer a thing merely to delight in..... It influences events..... creates difficulties..... dissolves them (in the novels) all is character and all is at the same time, action.... the action is created here by those characrters who remain true to themselves; it is their constancy which, like a law of necessity, sets the events moving; and through these they gradually manifest themselves.

The correspondence in a novel of this kind between the action and the characters is so essential that one can hardly find terms to describe it without appearing to exaggerate; one might say that a change in the situation always involves a change in the characters, while every change dramatic or psychological, external or internal, is either caused or given its form by something in both."

Jane Austen's neo-classical temperament was another subject of consideration. There is so much of reason as against emotion in her novels that it could be the subject of yet another approach. Lord David Cecil elaborates it and his remarks can serve as a prelude to what other critics say of her at longer lengths mostly things which can still be covered by 'reason'.

"She despised all ideals, however, lofty, that were not practical, all emotions, however, soul-stirring, if they did not in fact make for the benefit and happiness of mankind. Indeed, she did not value emotions as such at all. She reserved some of her most mischievous mockery for extravagant maternal affection and sentimental rhapsodizing over nature. Love itself, though she understood its workings admirably, did not rouse her enthusiasm unless it was justified by reason....."

Of the more elaborate approaches of the twentieth

century (fixing on something specific) we find those of Mary Lascelles, D.W.Harding, R.A.Brower, Marvin Mudrick, C.S. Lewes, Malcolm Bradbury, T.R.Edwards and Lawrence Lerner.

Many Lascelles makes an effective approach to Jane Austen's art through her style. She brings out how she can tell her story - how she makes it intelligible by presenting symmetrically posed precisely interrelated happenings through the talk of her characters. Even idiosyncratic speech, misuse of words, disjointed sentences become a part of this modelling. She suggests social variants in speech of syntax and phrasing rather than by vocabulary. Few novelists could be more scrupulous than her in the phrasing of the thoughts of their characters. Jane Austen never repeats herself. Each social strata has its slang and mannerisms of speech make the characters effective. To find out how Jane Austen achieved the discreet use of idiosyncrasy in speech, Mary Lascelles examines the corrections in the rough drafts of the novels. Lascelles concludes:

"The virtue of this style which Jane Austen has made to be the means of communication of her characters lies in its equitable settlement of conflicting claims; not only does it allow her people to be constant without becoming static, but it gives them a language in which they may speak to us as they would while telling us what she means that they should. Moreover 'it achieves harmony with her narrative matter.... Jane Austen's narrative style shows a curiously chameleon-like faculty; it varies in colour as the habits of expression of the several characters impress themselves on the relation of the episodes in which they are involved, and on the description of their situations.

The suggestion by Henry Austen that Jane's favourite reading in prose and verse was in Johnson and Cowper respectively, explains to a great extent, the purity, chastity and pliability of her style. She seems to have avoided the pomposness of Johnson and taken more and more to

the austere, refined and dramatic style of Cowper whose blank verse was nearest to refined prose. Since he was one of the most prosaic of poets, this very drawback provided a good stylistic model for Jane Austen. A comparative analysis can be relevant here.

D.W.Harding made a psychological approach by pointing out that Jane Austen really disliked those persons she caricatured in her novels and made acceptable by endowing them with an indispensable place in the economic and social set-up of the society she portrays. It is an instance of a two-fold attitude-one of what Harding calls "regulated hatred" and the other of their acceptance as part of the society which the novelist holds on to. As Harding puts it:

"As a novelist, therefore, part of her aim was to find the means for unobtrusive spiritual survival, without open conflict with the friendly people around her whose standards in simpler things she could accept and whose affection she greatly needed. She found, of course, that one of the most useful peculiarities of her society was its willingness to remain blind to the implications of a caricature. She found people eager to laugh at faults they tolerated in themselves and their friends, so long as the faults were exaggerated and the laughter 'good-natured' - so long, that is, as the assault on society could be regarded as a mock assault and not genuinely disruptive. Satire such as this is obviously a means not of admonition but of self-preservation.

Hence one of Jane Austen's most successful methods is to offer her readers every excuse for regarding as rather exaggerated figures of fun people whom she herself detests and fears.

Harding concludes that "the thesis that the ruling standards of our social group leave a perfectly comfortable niche for detestable people and give them sufficient sanction

to persist, would, if it were argued seriously, arouse the most violent opposition, the most determined apologetics for things as they are, and the most reproachful pleas for a sense of proportion."

Another conclusion that he reaches about Jane Austen's style is more relevant: "Caricature served Jane Austen's purpose perfectly. Under her treatment one can never say where caricature leaves off and the claim to serious portraiture begins." That the earlier conclusion is also an important aspect of Jane Austen's make-up is proved by a biographical fact. Harding says, " We know too, at the biographical level, that Jane Austen herself, in a precisely similar situation to Charlotte's (in 'Pride and Prejudice'), spent a night of psychological crisis in deciding to revoke her acceptance of an 'advantageous' proposal made the previous evening. However, we interpret this involvement in social complexity - either as "regulated hatred" as Harding puts it or as a genius for comedy which used distasteful persons for artistic ends - the relationship of the author with her social setting is unique, and such an approach could only be made in the light of the advances in psychological studies in the twentieth century.

Leonard Woolf (1942) makes an approach to Jane Austen's art through her economic standards as they manifest themselves in her novels. He makes some interesting deductions.

"I find it surprising that her social and economic standards should be, except in one important particular, those which we associate with a capitalist bourgeoisie rather than with country gentlemen and aristocrats." The exception is her attitude to 'work' which, as Woolf points out, is contrary to that of the bourgeoisie. "There is hardly a single male character in her novels who does any work; to work at all is, indeed, almost incompatible with the status of a gentleman." He adds " Out of six heroes three are

clergymen..... none of them seems to 'work' as clergyman." But otherwise, Jane Austen's social standards are almost entirely those of money and snobbery. "It is remarkable to what an extent the plots and characters are dominated by questions of money..... The axis of the plot in every novel except 'Emma' is money and marriage or rank and marriage.... The only social standard in the novels which competes with money is snobbery.... All the characters are fundamentally snobs with regard to class."

The critical approaches of the mid-twentieth century delve in such curious fields and shift from the external to the internal and from the social to the psychological and artistic view.

R.A.Brower writing in 1945 connects the novels of Jane Austen with the 'real' Jane Austen and her mind with its awareness of the multiple ways of reading a man's behaviour. The twentieth century view of ambivalence in the same word or action becomes relevant in this approach. As he puts it:

"What is distinctive about this mind is its control: the union of altertness of the many possible meanings of a human action with the steady power of making precisely defined statements of this ambiguity."

This multiple significance emerges because 'Jane Austen defines so precisely the ironic implications of what is said and because she gradually limits the possibilities with which the reader is to be most concerned.' In 'Pride and Prejudice', as the reader goes on, he sees that he has been prepared for the climax by a skilful allowance for alternative 'readings' of Darcy's character. Brower says,

"What most satisfies a present-day reader in following the central drama is Jane Austen's awareness that it is difficult to 'know' any complex person, that knowledge of a man like Darcy is an interpretation and a construction

not a simple absolute.... Mr Darcy is hardly recognizable as the 'same' man when he is described by Mr.Wickham, or his housekeeper, or Elizabeth, or Mr. Bingley."

In her conversation with Bingley and Darcy,Elizabeth remarks : "Yes; but intricate characters are the most amusing. They have at least that advantage." She adds, "But people themselves alter so much, that there is something new to be observed for ever."

Bower concludes, "As elsewhere in Jane Austen there is an irony beyond the immediate irony, a smile beyond the first smile."

Making one out of innumerable approaches to this complexity, Brower selects the instance of 'tones' of voice. He says,

"We can find considerable 'amusement' in exploring the various tones of voice appropriate for reading Darcy's speeches. Elizabeth hears his question as expressing 'premeditated contempt.'.... But for Darcy's next remark.... we may hear a tone expressive of some interest....' He really believed, that were it not for the inferiority of her connections, he should be in some danger." Brower concludes,

"We must hear the remark in a tone which includes this qualification. This simultaniety of tonal 'layer's can be matched only if the satire of Pope where.... by a single sound the several sounds he hears (are) equally appropriate and necessary..... No speaking voice could possibly represent the variety of tones which is conveyed to the reader by such interplay of dialogue and comment. ... Readeing Jane Austen may rightlybe compared to hearing a Mozart opera, where the music, especially the orchestration, serves as a contrasting and enriching commentary on the words of arias and recitatives and on the dramatic situation."

Andrew H.Wright, inhis "Jane Austen's Novels' makes

an approach by selecting elements of dramatic structure which, according to him, manifest themselves more conspicuously in Jane Austen's novels than in those of other novelists. By concentrating on the more important of these elements - 'the dramatic mode' and 'interior disclosures', we can form an idea of the novelty of his perceptions.

Of the former, Andrew H. Wright says, "Very much of Jane Austen's work is in dialogue form; she is a master-dramatist - with a perfect ear, a perfect sense of timing, a shrewd instinct for climax and anti-climax.... In the drama, irony proceeds as Sedgewick points out, from 'The sense of contradiction felt by spectators of a drama who see a character acting in ignorance of his condition.' As examples, he gives the ignorance of Mrs. Bennet regarding the fun made of her by her husband; John Dashwood's ignorance that his instinct of generosity is being exhausted; Sir Walter's unawareness of his own snobbery and vanity. Similar Lady Catherine de Borough's self-ignorance is so great that it is easy for Elizabeth to rout her in all her arguments.

Jane Austen's dramatic mode, according to Wright, includes long conversations which are so compressed as to serve for dramatic dialogues. The technique is used in Emma in the compression of talk between Mrs. Elton and the rest of the guests. It has a visual effect also and we can almost see Mrs. Elton talking so quickly that the others cannot keep pace with her.

There is also the method of giving an indirect discourse or verbatim report of a conversation. Jane Austen used this technique for two purposes - to shorten long conventional dialogues and to present talk which she could not have heard with perfect accuracy.

In exploring the narrative technique of Jane Austen, Andrew Wright accredits her with anticipating the technique of stream-of-consciousness novelists by using a method of

interior disclosure. Instead of the movement of consciousness, it is a full view of "thoughts and imaginings.":

"In the novel we see people's thoughts and imaginings without the colourations of fear, reserve, and diffidence, which in life constitute effective barriers against the disclosure of personality.... with an omniscience.... Jane Austen allows us to see within the minds not only of her heroines but of many other characters as well.... Besides, Jane Austen's very omniscience argues that a single point of view could not comprehend the intent of the novels full: the many shifts in viewpoint indicate a completeness and a detachment which none of the characters can possibly share."

Wright's conclusion marks an effective advance in understanding the subtly shifting viewpoints in the novels of Jane Austen. His approach explains how she reveals the total personality of a character in this manner:

"Jane Austen's characters are instruments of a profound vision. She laughs at man, but only because she takes him seriously; examines humanity closely, but the more she perceives the less she understands - or perhaps one had better say, the more she understands, the more is she perplexed by the contradictions which she finds. She has what Vivas calls 'a conception of the total personality.'"

Jane Austen does make an attempt, through her "several talents and techniques, to split open the secret heart of this contemptible lump of living clay - a human being - and extract its wonderful essence."

Wright also makes a new approach to an understanding of Jane Austen's style. It is by tracing the influence of Dr. Johnson. The first of these is the use of abstractions and vague terms. The second is a neat balancing of statements within the sentence and rhetorical repetition. The effect of these devices is to lend a sharpness to her irony. As is

obvious even on a casual reading of her novels, Jane Austen has a perfect command of the ironic style. Wright says of this,

"So far as style is concerned, Jane Austen's irony is much more pervasive than the usual rhetorical categories will allow. Understatement and antiphrasis by no means account for all the ironies in her diction and syntax. But other categories - however useful in an analysis of this kind - betray their own inadequacies at the moment when the light thus shed reveals farther, deeper, subtler shadows: for style ... is a finally indissoluble unity, a fabric which cannot be cut up without destroying the harmony of the whole."

Wright concludes by emphasizing the "transparent vesture" of style which is responsible for Jane Austen's front rank among the English novelists.

Viewing all these critical approaches as reactions of different critical temperaments to the complex artistic genius of Jane Austen, we class them according to the general antithesis between the 'heart' and the 'head'. Such admirers as Scott, Whately, Macaulay who discerned the artistic ingenuity of Jane Austen, had an eye for the exquisite operation of reason, intelligence and judgement in Jane Austen's novels even while they are conscious of her limitations. On the other hand, 'critics' such as Charlotte Brone, being advocates of the 'heart', interpret limitation as synonymous with lack of imagination, complacency and confinement by mundane reality. These two schools of thought mark the two divergent responses during the Romantic and Victorian periods. Both sets of critics agree that Jane Austen presented limited areas of experience. They disagree because they make different demands from art and also because the second set of critics take life to be a matter of feeling which is the subject matter of tragedy. This could not be expected of Jane Austen whose excellence lay in her essentially comic outlook on life.

There is also the critical dilemma confronting the admirers of Jane Austen. They find it difficult to reconcile the apparently superficial nature of her subject-matter with the absolute command of experience. Ian Watt makes an approach to this problem and points out that George Henry Lewes was the first to try to resolve the critical dilemma created by the antithesis between the maturity of the form and the social and spiritual narrowness of the content. The technical maturity and perfection of Jane Austen has often been likened to Shakespeare's. Lewes called Jane Austen a prose Shakespeare and added,

"Inspite of the sense of incongruity which besets us in the words 'prose Shakespeare, we confess the greatness of Miss Austen, her marvellous dramatic power seems more than anything in Scott akin to the greatest quality in Shakespeare."

Ian Watt says, "By drawing attention to Jane Austen's dramatic power, to the great objectivity with which she presented her characters and their relationships, Lewes went some way toward explaining how, although the stage and the cast of Jane Austen's novels may be small, the play is not. Yet even in Lewes's later tribute that Jane Austen was the greatest artist that has ever written, using the terms to signify the most perfect mastery over the means to her end", we can see that Lewes still conceded the small scale of Jane Austen's fictional world. For him the best that could be said was 'Her circle may be restricted, but it is complete. Her world is a perfect orb and vital.'"

A subsequent critic Richard Simpson in 1870 made an approach to resolve the dichotomy of form and content. His approach further established Jane Austen's affinity with Shakespeare in using irony and humour as stylistic devices. He discussed Jane's Austen's most important qualities - humour as a way of criticizing characters and their society; and irony as a means of moral evaluation. This was used as a

means of transcending the limitations of the novel's characters and their concerns. After the example of Shakespeare, Simpson pointed out that Jane Austen's humour was quick with vivacity:

"It is clear she began, as Shakespeare began, with being an ironical censor of her contemporaries....She began by being an ironical critic; she manifested her judgement of them not by direct censure, but by the indirect method of imitating and exaggerating the faults of her models, thus clearing the fountain by first stirring up the mud. This critical spirit lies at the foundation of her artistic faculty. Criticism, humour, irony, the judgement not of one that gives sentence but of the mimic who quizzes while he mocks, are her characteristics."

Ian Watt concludes more succinctly than any critic before him those traits in Jane Austen as a novelist which account for her power as well as her limitations:

".....Jane Austen's view of life contains..... the class system, the insistence on manners and decorum, the reverence for whatever is established.

Thus all critics from her own times down to the Twentieth century, have been unanimous in the praise for Jane Austen's capacity for exquisite portrayal of life and character with a finished workmanship worthy of the greatest novelists. Her limitation of vision has been accepted almost as another asset because it enabled her to work on a limited canvas - her two inches of ivory. Of this quality, Cazamian, another twentieth-century critic, says: "In the hands of Jane Austen the subject is thoroughly sifted, and more strictly reduced to essentials; all the worldliness over which Miss Burney loves to linger is unknown to her or is omitted, because the circle of her experience is more narrow, or indeed purely intimate."

It will be fitting to conclude this section by the tribute paid by Cazamian which sums up the essential quality of her work: "Her work represents in an original way the eternal comedy of life;.... she allows the virtual quaintness of whatever is human to grow active of itself and to tell."

This is the Shakespearean quality so often suggested in other words by other critics. With an achievement so distinguished she leaves practically nothing to be desired by way of artistic perfection. Hence in any study aiming at a re-assessment certain other factors will have to be emphasized which constitute another aspect the topical, social and individual - of the art, outlook and technique of Jane Austen.

(b) The purpose of the present study. The proposed departure in Approach .

As already said, Jane Austen has her other sides manifested in her novels. They have not been adequately emphasized. Actually, they constitute the inner background of her consciousness in the act of creation. Without them her novels would have been different and perhaps not so compact and meaningful. This stuff determines her frame of mind and her consciousness.

The eighteen century had seen an upheaval in national and social life. Science and materialism were challenging the old order of normality and breaking it up. It was an imperceptible process and the neo-classical movement in literature was concerned with preserving, consolidating and re-ordering the old pattern of life. To show this, we shall analyse all these in the subsequent part of the thesis. Our approach to the works and art of Jane Austen will be determined by the stand she takes with regard to the disintegrating forces and how far she assimilates and re-organizes these forces and influences in the body of her work. The clue will be provided by the frame of mind in which she writes and how far it is different from that of the novelists preceding her.

Before embarking on this, let us define the goals which she had set for herself, consciously or unconsciously. These were all conditioned by the gradual revolution in thought since the Restoration which marks the first onset of reason and break from the semi-medieval world of the Renaissance and the beginning of the modern world. Henceforth both worlds, the old and the new were fused in the imagination and outlook of writers. When the novel began in the Eighteenth Century, this fusion was still going on and it took various forms from Defoe to Sterne. While Defoe still retains romantic elements, Fielding minimizes them but cannot fully purge them. They are again present in Smollett and to a greater degree in Sterne. Jane Austen was the first novelist to subordinate all these elements to a rational interpretation of life. But she had really transmuted them and used them for her purposes.

So in the present study, we shall see how Jane Austen used the traditional elements for her own purposes and fused them with the new scientific, materialistic, and rational elements which were acquiring a gradual control of the national consciousness. Before this, we have to examine what these new forces were and how they had been shaping that consciousness which Jane Austen inherited and fused with the traditional elements.

The manifold dilemmas of Jane Austen's age were the product of the conflict of the new thought-process with the traditional way of life and while discussing these modes of thought and their impact we shall see how these dilemmas came into being.

C H A P T E R - II

CHAPTER - II

Manifold Dilemmas of Jane Austen's Age : The Background

The philosophy of reason which dominated the Eighteenth Century and prepared the background in which Jane Austen came to write, began with the thought of Hobbes and Newton. The radical empiricism which emerges as the outlook which governs the thoughts and actions of her characters, can be traced to Hobbes. His philosophy was one of reason and cold practical realism. It was at one with the new scepticism bestowed by science. The system of Galileo had established a mechanical order in the movements of the heavenly bodies. Hobbes reduces all the material universe to movement and reduces to the same principle the whole moral universe of mind and society. Sensations and ideas are also bound up with physical causes. Tangibility, which later governs classical reason, is the chiefest attribute, putting spiritual power next to civil power. The collective body of society is the 'Leviathan' which is supreme. This doctrine anticipates materialism and utilitarianism.

At the same time, there is an awakening and diffusion of the scientific spirit in England. From Bacon's time, induction had become a recognized method, the observation of nature was more and more tending to replace scholastic discussions. The granting of a charter to the Royal Society for the advancement of Science in 1662 brought about a consolidation of forces tending to the triumph of rationality. Hereafter science mixes broadly with the social life. In 1672 Newton appeared on the scene and scientific activity begins to permeate every activity of life. Reason now definitely establishes its claims to direct thought as well as life. The eighteenth century and the age of classicism finds in it one of their essential certitudes.

The other strand which starts and continues to Jane Austen's day is religious rationalism. A theology of reason is ushered in by Isaac Barrow who explained the duties of love

and charity as obligations of clear-sighted wisdom; the commandments are explained as appeals to good sense and belief as an outcome of enlightened judgement. The element of mysticism is effaced and theology becomes utilitarian. This trend shows itslef in the absence of any religious preoccupations in the writers of the Eighteenth Century, success, fortune, honours - everything depends on an active and sensible life of industry. Morality is a question of self-interest wisely understood.

Thus a new era was beginning and science and reason were opening up the present towards the future. There would have been no dilemmas in the Age of Jane Austen a century later, had this been the only trend. However, there was also a parallel strain of dissidence which kept the opposite values alive and active. As soon as the scientific outlook asserts itself, the very writers who champion the cause of reason, begin to reveal contrary tendencies which had been present from the very beginning but had been obscured by the new movement.

Thus other promptings of a contrary nature - divergences of thought, of sensibility, and of taste-appear as dissonant qualities which refuse to be harmonized with the moral tone of the Eighteenth Century. These tendencies are seen in John Bunyan, George Fox and Thomas Ellwood. They raise to the status of art the natural expression of a fund of sentiment that dimly subsists in many souls. They form the connecting link between the past and the future, and reveal the persistence of a psychological temperament, the gradual awakening of which, during the Eighteenth Century, will open the way to a renovation in literature. Of these Ralph Cudworth and Henry More were spiritualists and idealists whose influence was not wide, but the work of John Bunyan is animated by a violent ardour explicating in dreams, symbols and allegories. Each of his great works gives the story of the supreme experience in which is summed up every soul's life. A moving sincerity emanates from his pages and the

moral and organic basis of an ideal beyond reason and commonsense is prepared Grace Abounding, The Life and Death of Mr. Badman and above all The Pilgrim's Progress constitute this opposite side and their influence carries forward the religious emotion providing a counter balancing force against science and reason.

Fox and Ellwood also served to keep the spiritual side alive. George Fox started the Quaker movement which cast a picturesque glow on the religious landscape throughout the eighteenth centruy. Denounced, beaten, imprisoned, at times put to death, the Quakers survived and preserved the flame of purity and the spark of beauty to redeem the dreary landscape of reason in the Eighteenth Century.

The next important factor in building up the philosophy of reason was the influence of John Locke. He provided a mode of thought which had that quality which could be called "reason for the average man." Locke's philosophical empiricism is founded upon the instincts and desires of practical men who are prepared to find complexities in truth and anxious to adapt themselves flexibly to what exists. It is a preliminary motive of prudence and wisdom that is at the source of his "Essay on the Human Understanding". It was an important aspect of rationality to assure ourselves as to what we are able to know, intended to develop a critical attitude of mind arising from an experimental good sense. General concepts which were so popular in the Age of Reason down till Jane Austen's time, were first given a validity by the philosophy of Locke. Essential certitudes are founded by the operationof thought on the particular. Verbal wranglings of a scholastic philosophy vanish before the cold, clear light of understanding. Knowledge is necessary only with a view to action. Thus rationalism as a way of life - interwoven with the exigencies of life - is preapred as a code of action.

With the actual beginning of the classical Age, the way was more clearly paved for the those dilemmas of thought

and belief which continue to show themselves in writers of sensitive temperaments. It is more so in the field of fiction where the novelists inherited the tradition of the prose romance. The peculiar temper of the middle classes was also responsible for the persistence of these elements. The moral and social tendencies which the middle classes represent condition the literature, particularly the novel, in the Eighteenth Century. Without taking account of Defoe, Steele and Addison we cannot understand the age of which Jane Austen was a product and the dilemmas which faced it. If we examine the very nature of these writers, we find that they are at once the product and the cause of these tendencies. The movements of which they are the heralds, henceforth become a part of the existing framework of literature and society. Much more solidly than the Pope and Swift, Defoe, Addison and Steele are psychologically connected with Richardson, and after Richardson, the dualities, which are in germ till the middle of the Eighteenth Century assume the magnitude of dilemmas. Let us examine how it comes to be so.

The two-fold division of moral, social and political tendencies was inherent in the two-fold nature of the dominant classes in the beginning of the Eighteenth Century. The classical of turn of mind, the demand for clear order and a chosen form, the ideal of a studied correctness, were associated with the culture of the elegant sets, whose manners and ideas were gradually combining with the upper middle classes. At a point, this order becomes identified with them. The wealthy merchants, the financiers - the bourgeois - acquire the tone of the superior class but they do not think, do not feel in common with them. Their presence still diffuses a different influence in society, encouraging a fondness for piety, simplicity, and sentimental moralism. Thus two opposite poles are instinctively prepared - reason and sentiment - and the later Eighteenth society till Jane Austen and to the age subsequent to her continues to suffer a psychological split which was hard to reconcile.

It is in this way that antithetical elements enter in the moral tone of the period preceding Jane Austen. These elements of a middle - class nature, enter into the psychological and literary atmosphere of the age; they bring with them a need for balance and measure, and so seem to lend themselves without effort to the full realization of its standard; but at the same time, they sow germs of difference and disintegration preparing the way for an inner unrest.

Of the two tendencies, the first can be most easily identified with Pope and Swift while the second can be traced in the writings of Defoe, Addison and Steele. The one began under foreign influence while the other was more truly national. Certain desires, certain elementary needs of the soul, are more directly satisfied throughit. And the new artistic change partly seen in Jane Austen, will owe to both these influences.

Although Defoe, Addison and Steele have been identified with sentiment, the two strains can also be perceived within their work and may serve as a fruitful guide in our later analysis. No writer is so definitely the very image of his time than Defoe. Its 'form and pressure' throbs within his work as it does later in Fielding and Jane Austen. Of a very marked individuality, and outstanding through the many-sided nature of his talent, Defoe's intellectual outlook preserves in contact with reality a freshness of perception and a spontaneous way of looking at things. Things are diverse and yet, at the bottom, one. He is the champion of individuality and yet he expresses the desire for hierarchy and just subordination. This is couples with liberty. The Complete English Tradesman makes a case for according literary and other privileges to the trading class; The complete English Gentleman makes a plea for the tradesman to attain to culture, and to integrate himself in the ruling class; to sweep away the barrier of refinement. Thus Defoe's solution, after presenting two separate classes, lies in a synthesis.

Thus the paradox which is the ideal Defoe advocates is the idea of a class of society which incorporates the best qualities of the nobility with the principle of equality, respect for the concrete and the useful, adopting empiricism and rationalism as cardinal principles of conduct in everyday life. Realism for Defoe is the natural instrument of literature. However imaginary a work like 'Robinson Crusoe' may be it is based on details each of which is derived from experience. Invention with Defoe, is remarkable for the extreme resemblance of its products with the actual combinations of things. His imagination works in the direction of reality because he is full of it; the pictures he draws have all the solid relief of facts, because his look always absorbs the qualities of what he sees. In this respect he is the preceptor of Jane Austen.

Addison and Steele are the other exemplifiers of the duality developed later in Jane Austen's time. Steele embodies more of sentiment than reason while Addison does the opposite. He is a neo-classic only by accident while Addison was a finished product of this movement. Steele possesses a gift of delicacy and fine shading while his form is less laboured and more spontaneous. Addison is just the opposite and both together collaborated in the character of Sir Roger and the sketches of social life centering around him producing a synthesis which served as a model for the portraits of gentility drawn by subsequent novelists. Even Jane Austen availed of the qualities of both.

This synthesis is typically embodied in 'The Christian Hero' of Steele and herein he emphasizes the needs of moral regularity, of idealism, of feeling and a spiritual harmony which according to him, are the essentials of character for the new age. It is a compromise between the aristocratic temper and the Puritan Spirit. The task of Steele and Addison was to reconcile these opposite tendencies. The novels of Richardson will show the

development of these germs. Addison adds to it a judicious criticism of manners and characters with an ironic humour which will again be seen to blossom in Jane Austen with all his qualities. The comedy of human relations - the typical Jane Austen trait appears for the first time in 'The Spectators'.

As reason became more and more mingled with sentiment, the later years of the Eighteenth Century saw the resurgence of the novel in Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne. The polarity, however, remained intact and we find these novelists oscillating between them and synthesizing the two opposites as best as they could. The chiefest dilemma being to evolve a way for re-integrating the disintegrated normality and to bridge the gap between convention and the new way of life, these novelists evolved their individual syntheses. Other apparent offshoots of the opposition such as past and present, the contrasting ways of life and the spirit of questioning and belief are all found in varying degrees in their works. As a matter of fact, the whole of the later Eighteenth Century is absorbed by a vast endeavour of analysis and criticism. The novelists shared it as far as their task of portraying life permitted it. Their attempts at resolution and re-adjustement deserve separate consideration.

To begin with the Eighteenth Century novel was essentially preoccupied with morality and sentiment. After having formerly represented allegorical or ideal visions, it tends more and more to become a picture of life. The middle-class mind would have this picture real, because it had a firm hold on reality, and could not break away from it. Thus realism came to find its most favourable field in the novel. But the middle class also had a Puritan strain which begot a mood of reflectiveness applied to conduct and so it wanted everypiece of writing animated by moralizing intentions; and in order to find outlet for these, it had recourse to sentiments and feelings.

Thus Richardson, through realistic to the core, seeks his inspiration in Puritan sentimentalism. The surroundings from which Richardson came resemble those of Scott and Jane Austen. Another affinity with Jane Austen is that his subject matter is impersonal. To the allegory of Bunyan, the essay of Steele and the novel of Defoe, he added the tradition of an all powerful sentimentalism. He also combined it with a utilitarian concern in matters of conduct which was to grow with the advance of the century. This is a realistic trait issuing from the concrete tendencies of middle-class thought. Thus all the opposite tendencies show themselves in a heterogeneous combination - that is the reason his synthesis is not lasting. The art of Richardson is limited in its sentimentalism; it emphasises certain elements of reality and neglects others; but in psychological analysis, each cranny of the heart is sounded with clear-sightedness. His psychological realism is sincere and effective within its limits. However, as will be seen in the following novelists upto Jane Austen, he is at his best when the artist and the psychologist, escaping from the tutelage of the moralist, actually come to work independently.

Richardson's influence is seen in the psychological realism of Jane Austen and in the restraint on sentiment which she is careful to impose in his art. Her greater affinity is with the unflinching realism and comic sense of Fielding. Sentiment and realism went hand in hand with Richardson; realism and comedy mark a more common ground for the novelists in Fielding. He also accords more with the temperament of Jane Austen because his approach is more normal. The sentimental dilemma is not for him. His desire is to give sentiment its right place; but also to integrate it in an organic series of tendencies, where each contributes to maintain a mutual balance. He stands not for extremes but for a synthesis, the practical and most stable form. His realism unites the most common desires of the new society in England: the taste for the concrete, the need to see it without illusion in order not to feel any surprise or disappointment.

when acting upon it and cooperating with it; the resolution not to sacrifice the several elements of the human being one to another, and to know at times how to feel a soft emotion, when it is useful that the soul should be softened. These are precisely the traits which we find in Jane Austen's art in addition to those typically her own. Fielding's realism also finds its lineage in Jane Austen. As in her case, it does not go to the excess of a bitter preference for the cruel truths. For Fielding as for Shakespeare and for Jane Austen who has the Shakespearean touch, some people are born good, other bad, but in most cases each has a mixture of good and evil. He also studies these characters impersonally with reference to the actions and behaviour and prepares the way for the novel of manners - a genre to which Jane Austen conformed.

With the accumulated heritage of these writers, the Eighteenth Century closed very fruitfully with the work of fiction-writers going on without a break while there was a new beginning in poetry. The rift between reason and sentiment is seen to occur only in poetry; in fiction the two remain integrated under the common cult of realism. Even pure classicism preserves a dim and hidden existence while it remains in its fullness as a clear and well-defined factor with some exceptional temperaments among which Jane Austen is the most noteworthy. These are isolated but vigorous personalities who remain immune to the new resurgence of the romantic spirit and in effect continue to be anti-romantic. For them the cult of classicism is not for a merely passive survival, but it answers to a deliberate choice. These artists react against the new spirit and follow the truth of their instinct. They maintain a realistic balance and often synthesise the conflicting elements. The dilemmas of the age - reason versus emotion, science versus religion, form versus content and finally the individual versus the society are reconciled by them.

We shall see how in the works of Jane Austen this manifold synthesis takes place and answers the need for a unified vision which became more urgent in the next age.

Before this, let us take stock of one singular trait which Jane Austen possesses by virtue of her historical position in the age of turmoil and hectic political activity. The French Revolution took place when she was fourteen and at this sensitive age, she must have been affected by the enthusiasm and subsequently by the anti-revolutionary spirit which swept England at the time. Wordsworth only five years older, was roused to the very core of his being by all the events taking place after 1789. However, Jane Austen lived through this age and the Napoleonic wars as if she lived in another country. This is a measure of her non-involvement. Similarly, the romantic revival left her unaffected, which indicates that she was not susceptible to romantic feelings of wonder, exaltation or any of the mystic longings. This creates another dilemma - that the writer who had denied all the normal susceptibilities to herself, should still possess a negative capability which has been defined as the capacity of experiencing all the heights and depths of human emotions. The explanation that she held aloof with an "ironical immunity" shows that she cultivated a deliberate balance in thought and her approach to life. It also means that she did face all the dilemmas squarely and re-moulded them to fit the scheme of her art. Any study of her reaction to problems of her age must take account of this deliberate scheme.

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C H A P T E R - III

CHAPTER III

JANE AUSTEN AND THE MANIFOLD DILEMMAS

The manifold dilemmas of Jane Austen generally relate to the feminine world, and they are remarkably reflected in the female characters created by her, particularly in her heroines. After all, she was a woman, and it is but natural that she should look at the world from the feminine angle. The masculine world is also portrayed, but that is only in patches. Jane had little knowledge of the ways of the world of its wiles and guiles, and hence she mainly concentrated on the women's world that she knew so intimately. She chose a small circle for her treatment, and that circle consisted of the gentry of the English country. This gentry is revealed to us in her novels from a woman's point of view. Though she invests all her characters - both male and female - with certain recognizable traits and qualities, but her "heroines reveal their full personality" to us. Each one of her novels portrays a dominant female character after the writer herself and it is through that character that the manifold dilemmas of the feminine world of Jane's times are brought to the fore. In Northanger Abbey, Catherine Morland is the central character; in Sense and Sensibility we have Elinor and Marianne; in Pride and Prejudice, Elizabeth Bennet occupies the place of pride; in Persuasion, Anne Elliot is the dominant personality; in Emma; the story revolves around the heroine Emma; and in Mansfield Park, it is Fanny Price who plays the pivotal role. We thus notice that Jane Austen more or less reveals not only the behaviour and manners of women in general of her day but also her own 'real self', her very conscience, in a guarded and guised way. Her fiction squarely deals with the hopes, fears and speculations of womankind, and hence we shall take up a critical and an analytical study of Jane's novels one by one in order to trace the development of the personality of her dominant female characters in this chapter, but before we do so we have to take stock of the multi-dimensional and multi-

pronged problems of the feminine world (as depicted by Miss Austen).

I. Jane's Feminine World and Its Manifold Problems

Jane Austen, who hardly ever tries to touch "the purely masculine world" except when men are seen in the company of women, usually keeps herself confined to the intimate portrayal of the feminine world, which is well within her range and experience. To her, male characters are significant so long as they are fathers, brothers, uncles, cousins, wooers, and husbands to the girls on whom her focus is mainly fixed. They generally tend to be colourless and lifeless, for example, Willoughby, in Sense and Sensibility and Wickham in Pride and Prejudice, but their female counterparts are quite convincing and intimately revealed. Some scholars have taken it as Jane's weakness, but this weakness is well compensated by her dazzling heroines, who tend to be creatures of 'flesh and blood' and who outshine menfolks easily. Her men may be 'puppets' and one dimensional at places, but her dominant women are often multi-dimensional colourful, and rounded. The latter ones are fully developed in the pages of Miss Austen. It is but natural, therefore, to concentrate on her feminine world and to examine its manifold dilemmas and problems here.

The avowedly feminine world of Jane Austen strives hard to establish a harmonious relationship and a workable understanding with the masculine world, which is at times tricky and selfish. Her feminine world is not totally free from blemishes or trivialities, but it does not become superfluous and incongruous in life. Some critics have harshly pointed out that Jane could draw only women bent upon manner - learning and husband - catching. But this is certainly an extreme view of an extreme view of an artist who faithfully unfurls before her readers the panorama of human life, especially of womankind that has been denied its due recognition and identity down the ages. Lord David Cecil is

nearer the truth when in his Introduction to Sense and Sensibility he remarks: "The visible structure of Jane Austen's stories may be flimsy enough; but their foundations drive deep down into the basic principles of human conduct. On her bit of ivory she has engraved a criticism of life as serious and as considerd as Hardy"³. And one who is offering "a criticism of life" can't be far removed from the reality of human existence. So, Jane depicts women out of her own observations and experiences in life, and not out of her mere fancy or her secluded 'ivory tower'.

In Jane's time, social and material conditions for women were not congenial. They were severely handicapped in respect of good education and proper employment. According to Christopher Gillie, all the heroines of Jane Austen "find themselves suffering under overlapping disadvantages in four categories: material, family, social, and personal".⁴ Because of these disadvantages, women had to suffer a lot and depend largely on men for social status and economic security. At best, they could be school teachers or governesses. More than that was not granted to them. Young girls were liabilities for their parents, and having attained the age of maturity they had no option but to look for suitable suitors and would-be husbands. Girls were generally allowed to go out and mix up with others at the age of seventeen. They attended social gatherings and balls with all the niceties and good manners. They had to show their delicate sense of culture, music and dance in order to attract the attention of rich young men of good breeding. This was the fashion of the day, and there was no harm or disgrace in doing so.

Smaller girls of lower classes were educated in boarding schools in Jane's time. In her novel Emma, we have a reference to such a school. But girls of upper and middle classes received their education and training from their mothers or governesses. Girls were generally encouraged to read and learn but people did accept certain limitations to girls and women in those days. Jane Austen mildly satirized

these limitations of womankind. She never liked than to be pompous, silly or vainglorious in their dealings with other humand beings. Her novels depict a number of stupid women like Mrs. Bennet and Mrs. Norris Smith and silly young girls like Miss Bertrams, Lucy Steels and Harriet Smith. Jane was of the view that these women and girls were not brought up properly and not given proper education. In her novel Mansfield Park, she laughs at the prevailing idea of feminine education :

Fanny could read, work, and write, but she had been taught nothing more; and as her cousins found her ignorant of many things with which they had been long familiar, they thought her prodigiously stupid, and for the first two or three weeks were continually bringing some fresh report of it into the drawing-room.⁵

Jane does not laugh at Fanny Price and her ignorance so much as at the affectations and vanities of her Bertram daughters, Maria and Julia. Fanny may not have an accurate knowledge geography and history, or she may be ignorant about the principal rivers of Russia, about the map of Europe, about Asia Minor, and "the chronological order of the kings of England,"⁶ and about the Roman emperors, but she has greater humility and generosity. Her "great want of genius and emulation" has rendered her less ambitions and least pompous, and the novelist satirizes the Bertram daughter for beint "entirely deficient in the less common acquirements of self-knowledge, generosity and humility"⁷ Jane laments that the two sisters were "admirably taught" in everything but "disposition". Obviously, Jane resorts to the technique of mild irony here and gently pokes fun at the two Bertram girls.

Even a cursory glance at Jane's novels will convince the reader that her heroines are well-informed or at least properly educated in social etiquette and manners. As a social comedian, Jane only observes them in their respective

roles, and secretly laughs at them over their incongruous conduct and attitude. In Mansfield Park, for instance, Jane makes us aware of the simple ignorance of Emma, her lack of higher education. She also highlights the Bertram daughters, Maria and Julia, and their faults and foibles, "their self-willed natures, their strong but immature emotions, their competitiveness and mutual jealousy...."⁸ Sometimes Jane's heroines or dominant women suffer from misjudgement and ignorance of the self. In Pride and Prejudice, Elizabeth Bennet develops strong notions against Mr. Darcy as the beginning of the novel though later on she changes her attitude towards him. True, disingenuousness, arrogance and unscrupulousness on the part of women and men effect temporary estrangement between them, but eventually in most of the cases they get reconciled and hold out a happy future.

For this kind of happy living in the future, Jane suggested that good education was necessary for both men and women. Though she was not that ardent for the uplift of womankind as Charlotte Bronte, she believed that many of the problems of the feminine world could be easily solved with the right kind of education and training. She held that women should be taught good manners, needle work and embroidery, music and song and dance, painting and drawing. Above all, they needed to develop prudence and right thinking for their real happiness at the personal and social levels. A reasonable sense of humility and balance could save them from their numerous day to day dilemmas and problems. Just as 'art lies in concealing art', beauty should also try to conceal itself to shine as a virtue. In no case a charming woman should profess to possess 'brains' or 'knowledge', for this creates envy and hatred among others. In Northanger Abbey, Catherine has "very good looks" and an affectionate heart to boot but keeps a low profile and at long last wins the heart of Henry. She does not display her mind anywhere, and this generates "an intense interest in each other."¹⁰

Miss Austen was quick enough to perceive the

trivialities and defective, upbringings of her young women, and she did not spare them for their shortcomings. She did not approve of their uncontrolled behaviour, their frequent visits or outings, their lack of knowledge of the outer world, their excessive fondness of balls and glittering clothes, etc.... In Northanger Abbey, Mrs. Allenis made a butt of Jane's gentle satire for her preoccupations with dress, particularly with her gown. Similarly in Pride and Prejudice, Elizabeth reprimands her sister Lydia for her wayward ways and uncontrollable spirits. She even cautions her indifferent father about this matter.

Later on, we learn from the story that Lydia proved Elizabeth's predictions true, and that her 'vain, ignorant, idle and absolutely uncontrolled' nature brought untold misery and abject disgrace to the entire Bennet family. At this juncture, the novelist comments thus: "Lydia was Lydia still - untamed, unabashed wild, noisy and fearless."¹¹ Evidently, Jane did not approve of the lewd and lecherous ways of women of her time. She did not attempt to idealize or glorify them unduly. She actually painted them as she found them in the real life around her. It is wrong to assume that she put her women characters a high pedestral, thereby humiliating her menfolk and berating their dignity. Both categories of her characters - male and female - are drawn from life. The only difference is that of degree in regard to their liveliness and vitality. Her women characters are naturally more intimately portrayed, for she herself belonged to their sex and her own feelings and experiences entered into their creation.

Christopher Gillie examines Jane's characters under three heads: the heroines, the heroes and minor characters.¹² He is of the opinion that the heroines are central to the plots of novels, and that the heroes - nothing to speak of minor characters - occupy the second place. The novelist sees the world from the central viewpoint of her heroines. The heroes, no doubt, deeply influence the heroines,

but are open to their miscalculation or misjudgement. Gillie further observes that in Jane's time "a young woman's experience of man was shaped by the social circumstances in which she met them."¹³ And the circumstances usually encouraged 'a kind of factitiousness of behaviour' in men. Some men were quite prone to win feminine approval of their manner, appearance, and behaviour, while some others were quite fastidious and reserved. It was, therefore, very difficult for girls to get to know men in their true mettle. Man-woman relationship grew up in Jane's day under unusual social constraints. It could turn out to be happy and harmonious only when they entered into love and wedlock.

Common women, however, in Jane's time were generally confronted with the twin problems of financial security and harmonious relationship in the family. Through marriage they often solved these problems, and hence marriage became almost a necessity for them. In Pride and Prejudice, Mrs. Bennet is always concerned about the marriage of her five daughters to gentlemen of taste and fine breed, so much so that at times she looks ludicrous. Employment or self-dependence for women was a matter of dream, and their heaven lay in their house. So, Jane Austen might have reduced the position of her heroes to a secondary place, but they practically govern and guide the lives of her heroines. In other words heroes "provoke, offset, good, and magnetize."¹⁴ her heroines. This is so clearly seen in the case of Mr. Darcy, who matches Elizabeth inch by inch in pride, prejudice and contempt, - the traits which eventually enlarge her perception of him in a true perspective.

In the social order of Jane Austen, a 'good' marriage invariably enhances the 'status' of the two partners, and 'status' is basically a matter of wealth and economic security. With the possible exception of just one heroine - Emma Woodhouse - with her £ 30,000, all the heroines of Miss Austen are short of wealth. The most distressed heroine, financially speaking, is Fanny Price in

Mansfield Park, who is dependent on her uncle, Sir Thomas Bertram. Even Elizabeth's financial condition is not so better, but somehow she manages to win the heart of 'the rich Prince' called Darcy from the clutches of Mr. Bingley's two sisters. In Mansfield Park, the novelist reports about the worldly Mary Crawford, in this manner, "Matrimony was her object, provided she could marry well,"¹⁵ and marrying well required "status" as much as personal value. But Darcy attached greater importance to personal value than to status, selecting penniless Elizabeth in preference to Bingley's sisters. All the heroines of Jane Austen, more or less, think favourably about marriage, for it offers them a sense of security on the social and economic planes. Jane has justified it in one of her letters to Fanny Knight: "Single women have a dreadful propensity for being poor - which is one very strong argument in favour of Matrimony."¹⁶ Moreover, matrimony was a strong weapon to do away with the evils of loneliness, and to make man and woman complete biologically and mentally. Jane knew this very well and instead of entrusting her women characters with larger social responsibilities she made them the queens of their lords' hearts and homes. In this matter, she differed from Charlotte Bronte, another reputed English authoress. Jane put a check upon herself and mostly highlighted the domestic and personal problems of her female protagonists. Like other women writers of her day, such as Fanny Burney and Maria Edgeworth, she looked at the human world from a peculiarly feminine point of view and brought to the fore the burning social, religious and economic issues of womankind. She, thus, became a champion of the woman's cause, without supporting her in her unwanted affections and varieties, in her undesirable outings and flirtations. Her objective in the novels was to create a happy and healthy environment for her inside the four walls of the house as well as in the society outside.

II. A Critical and Analytical Study of Jane's Novels

After having considered the manifold dilemmas and

problems of Jane's feminine world, we shall now take up her heroine-dominated novels one by one for a critical and analytical study. This sort of a study will enable us to mark their gradual growth in personality and character. On a close scrutiny, we shall find that their growth is channelized along the course of a definite aim and objective, and it moves from the burlesque of manners through the liberation of personality and culminates in the affirmation of individuality. A comedian that Jane Austen has been, she allows her female protagonists to grow and enlarge before our eyes, even if this growth and enlargement inevitably entails a certain amount of tension, bitterness and temporary estrangement from their male counterparts. It is erroneous to think that they grow and develop at the cost of 'heroes', for at the close of each novel a bright future or a happy marriage is promised to both of them.

(A) Northanger Abbey (1803 ; 1818)

Jane's elder sister, Cassandra, informs us in a note that Northanger Abbey was written in 1797 and 1798, that is, after First Impressions and Sense and Sensibility (or Concurrently with the latter). Dr. R.W.Chapman's 'chronology' assigns the calendar of 1798 for its probable construction. First Impressions, which became the basis of Pride and Prejudice, was begun in 1796. In the Spring of 1803 'a Ms novel in two volumes, entitled Susan' was sold to Messrs Crosby & Co. of Stationers' Hall Court, London for £10, and this Ms. later grew into Northanger Abbey. The London publisher never published the novel and one of Jane's brothers (presumably Henry) bought it back for £10 after the publication of Emma (1816).

When Jane gave the Ms. to Crosby, she retained a duplicate copy thereof, and went on revising it from time to time. In an 'Advertisement, by the Authoress' written in 1816-17 and prefixed to the first edition; it was stated that the novel was finished in 1803 and was intended for immediate publication. In March 1817, Jane informed Fanny Knight thus: "Miss Catherine is put upon the Shelve for the present, and I

do not know that she will ever come out." But we know that it did come out alongwith another novel, Persuasion (1818), posthumously, Douglas Bush rightly writes that Northanger Abbey was the earliest to be completed and, of the early novels, probably the nearest to its original form.¹⁷

Of all the novels of Jane Austen, Northanger Abbey has been conceived as a burlesque - a refined burlesque, no doubt - and this fact links it with her earliest writings like Evelyn (a short piece written in the Spring of 1792) and Catharine (1792). It is shorter in length than other novels and has a linear simiplicity of design. Clearly enough Catherine is "an anti-heroine" cast "in a pure spirit of comedy."¹⁸ In the novel, we find "a criticism of both art and life - the two integrated, so that life criticizes literature."¹⁹ The novelist states the disqualifications of Catherine as a heroine early in the opening chapter: "No one who had ever seen Catherine Moreland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be a heroine. Her situation in life, the character of her father and mother, her own person and disposition, were all equally against her."²⁰ She is though unheroic, still she prefers cricket, baseball, riding, riding on horseback, and running about the country, at the tender age of fourteen. She is of short stature, having no lover about her even at seventeen. As Ms. Allen is shifted to Bath from Fullerton, Mrs. Allen, a good humoured lady, asks the parents of Catherine to entrust her (whom Mrs. Allen liked deeply) to her care. Catherine is allowed to go with Mrs. Allen. At the beginning of the second chapter, a full description of the virtues of Catherine is given:

.....her heart was affectionate, her disposition cheerful and open, without conceit or affectation of any kind; her manners just removed from the awkwardness and shyness of a girl; her person pleasing, and, when in good looks, pretty, and her mind about as ignorant and uniformed as the female mind at seventeen usually is.²¹

Her lack of 'conceit or affectations' is her unique asset, about this sets her apart from other characters in the novel, like Mrs. Allen and Isabella and John Thorpe. The observant Henry notices her 'artlessness' as her real strength.

In the first three chapters of the novel, where Catherine is launched on her social career, the reader marks that "the strain of antiromantic mockery is dominant".²² By talking to the device of mockery, the novelist reminds us of 'the aberrations of romantic fiction' as contrasted with her own treatment of ordinary life. Through this device, Jane shows that her literary purpose is serious because of her consciousness of the social manners and the people's conditions of her time.

Jane's art of irony displays itself when she resorts to the exchange of pleasantries between Henry Tilney and Catherine after they have been introduced to each other in Bath:

'Were you never here before, madam ?'
 'Never, sir'
 'Indeed ! Have you yet honoured the Upper Rooms ?'
 'Yes, sir, I was there last Monday.'
 'Have you been to the theatre ?'
 'Yes, sir, I was at the play on Tuesday.'
 'To the concert ?'
 'Yes, sir, on Wednesday.'
 'And are you all together, pleased with Bath ?'
 'Yes - I like it very well.'
 'Now I must give one smirk, and then we may be rational again.'²³

The genteel tradition of Jane's society comes under fire here. Henry reminds her that she must keep a journal, and his confidante Isabella Thorpe tells Catherine of the 'laws of fiction' and introduces the latter to a great many new novels. Henry also talks to Mrs. Allen of Catherine's

gown openly, and then appears 'strange' to her. The above noted conversation between Henry and Catherine indicates their mutual interest in each other. She is asked to dance with him, but John Thorpe, brother to Isabella Thorpe, interposes by saying that she had a previous engagement with himself. The dancing affair causes some misunderstanding between the heroine and the hero. When Catherine refuses to divulge her thoughts to Henry, the latter promises to 'tease' her frequently, for 'teasing' is a great weapon to advance man-woman relationships - "nothing in the world advances intimacy so much."²⁴

In Chapter six, Isabella and Catherine meet and talk about The Mysteries of Udolpho and other 'horrid' books. Evidently, these books are full of suspense and horror. Amongst the other 'horrid' books are :Castle of Wolfenback, Mysterious Warnings, Necromancer of the Black Forest and Horrid mysteries. Catherine has now arrived at Northanger Abbey, Gloucestershire, and Henry has prepared her for such novel things on the way.

From the very beginning, Catherine shows a fair amount of sensibility towards Henry. His sudden disappearance from Bath, after their first meeting, invests him with a kind of 'mysteriousness' which is so becoming in a hero. On the way to the Abbey from Bath, she receives the lectures of Henry in a good humour; and though she is not so able to judge the picturesque she becomes ready to reject 'the whole city of Bath', which is supposed to wait in Gothic scenery and landscape. Such a good understanding grows between the two that Henry corrects 'her loose use of words'²⁵ and Catherine takes it lightly.

Isabella Thorpe is "a rather crude foil"²⁶ to Catherine, and tends to be shallow and vulgar at times. Her affectations and pomposity do not touch Catherine. Isabella is usually selfish in her friendship with Catherine, and she can even desert her on demand of time. Her brother, John

Thorpe, is a confirmed teller of lies, and he thinks that everything belongs to him - his horse, his gig and his wine - is better than what other people have. He is largely self-centred and self-conceited. Like her brother, Isabella display's 'decided pretension' or 'resolute stylishness'. Catherine is quite contrasted to Isabella, and possesses 'the real delicacy of a generous mind.' Her artlessness shows her innocent nature.

Catherine may not have that "rational thought and rational life"²⁷ which characterizes a person like Henry, but she commands an unerring sense of certain basic values. She may not possess the sense of discrimination which Henry has in plenty, she remains firm in her love of Hentry. Her lack of sophistication compels Captain Tilney to dance with Isabella. She has, however, the right kind of instinct to guide her through and to guide others' feelings. When Henry suggests that Isabella is in love with James but flirts with Frederick, Catherine replies at once: 'Oh ! no, not flirts. A woman in love with one man cannot flirt with another.' When Isabella and James (the brother of Catherine) leave for Clifton, John Thorpe begins wooing Catherine, this is a very good example of situational comedy. And by now we know that John can love nobody because of his self-centredness and boring nature.

Though Henry and Catherine love each other deeply, a hurdle is created by the reluctance of General Tilney (the father of Henry). This episode comes as a sore in the eye, for the young couple has already declared love for each other. Moreover, the General's interference strengthens the attachment of Henry and Catherine. They also come to understand each other better. In fact, the General likes Catherine and invites her to Northanger Abbey, thinking that she is rich. But it is John Thorpe who whispers to him and incites her greed. Later on, the same John informs the General in London that Catherine is poor and resourceless, and this infuriates the old man, who asks Catherine to go

away home without an escort for the seventy-mile journey. The girl obeys him, though his daughter - Eleanor - is greatly disturbed over the decision. A few day later, Henry visits the Morlands and explains his father's anger caused by Catherine's being 'less rich'. But why does the General trust such a crude person as John Thorpe ? It seems, Jane Austen employs "some relatively sensational incident or revelation to bring about the denouement...."²⁸ It is also possible that she intends a conflict between the fancies of Gothic fiction and the harsh realities of the world. General Tilney represents the reality of life, while the reader of the 'horror' novels lives in the world of illusion. The conflict inevitably threatens the harmonious existence of both Catherine and Henry. But this situation is finally averted by "the specious contrivance."²⁹ of having Eleanor marry a rich viscount. The General relents and allows the marriage of Henry with Catherine:

..... The General, soon after Eleanor's marriage, permitted his son to return to Northanger, and thence made him the bearer of his consent...³⁰

The marriage is solemnized, and everybody smiles.

The technique of Jane Austen in this novel is that of a burlesque. The comic vein becomes apparent at the very beginning of the novel. The description of Catherine's father is quite humorous in vein and style:

Her father was a clergyman, without being neglected or poor, and a very respectable man, though his name was Richard, and he had never been handsome.³¹

Henry, the hero of the novel, is depicted as a man of sharp wit and hilarious temper, though he becomes serious and mysterious of places. Of all the heroes of Jane's novels. he is the only one who is gifted with a serious comic bent of mind. Sometimes he cuts jokes upon the ignorance, naivete, and simplicity of Catherine, who remains an embodiment of

fortitude, unselfishness, and innocence throughout. It is she, in reality, who attracts Henry and keeps him steadfast in love. In no case, the heroine's role be undermined. Both the heroine and the hero grow immensely in the course of the story. The novel is cast in a lighter vein, and sets to correct the wrong notions of the rich class about 'status' and money, about the reading of sensational novels and the false assumptions of Gothic fiction. Speaking of the function of 'burlesque' in this novel Robert Liddell rightly remarks thus, "..... it is not only used in the sentimental education of the heroine, but also (as by Fielding, Thackeray and others) in light hearted mockery of the novelist's own tasks, as a technical device to help her over difficulties, and as an ornament applied to disguise weak parts in the construction."³² There are, clearly, certain weak points in the plot-structure of the novel, such as the over-dependence of the old General on the words of a non-entity like John Thorpe and the sudden marriage of Eleanor with a very rich viscount (who is he and whence does he come ? - no light is thrown on this aspect in the story).

Northanger Abbey is arguably the simplest of Jane's novels. It has a 'point of view', technically speaking. Catherine's presence is felt in all the scenes of the novel; she is present throughout as "participant, observer, or hearer" and the reader "follows events mainly through her eyes and ears and head and heart."³³ At the same time, Catherine is a simple soul, and her feelings and experiences as well as the reader's view of her are occasionally endorsed or modified by ironical remarks and direct comments from both the authoress and the hero (Henry).

Besides, the story advances, after the initial few chapters, through a series of dramatic scenes, with narrative links. This is yet another salient feature of Miss Austen's technique. Reaching Northanger Abbey, the narrative largely takes over in the form of a description of the heroine's

thoughts and feelings. Obviously, Jane Austen did not invent the dramatic novel, but she definitely added order and refinement to it by taking to "the functional and economical use of dialogue."³⁴ Being true to the dramatic device, Jane tried her best to alter or further the human relationships.

Northanger Abbey is also peculiar in one more thing - it employs a 'consistently colloquial naturalness in its speech. The talks of John Thorpe tend to be the illustrations of 'vulgar colloquialism', while those of Isabella are of 'artificial sensibility'. However, Catherine and other characters of the novel with the possible exception of General Tilney, exchange discourses in everyday style. No doubt, Henry's speeches of mockery are the remarkable bits of comedy. Of course, the last three chapters of the novel summarizing various feelings and events do not accord well with its earlier part wherein we find an 'easy flow' of language and expression.

(B) Sense and Sensibility (1811)

This novel was first written in epistolary form as Elinor and Marianne in the year 1795. After finishing the first version of Pride and Prejudice in November 1797, Jane Austen started revising Elinor and Marianne in narrative form. In the meantime, she wrote and published some other novels like Northanger Abbey and The Watsons (a fragment released in 1804-05). While happily settled at Chawton in 1809-10, Jane made out the final draft of Sense and Sensibility, and it was published in November 1811.

Sense and Sensibility is unique among Jane's novels in that it has two heroines - Elinor Dashwood and Marianne. The novelist faced problems of story-telling for having two heroines in it. Another problem before the novelist was how to radically recast the epistolary form of story into a narrative. Sense and Sensibility is unquestionably "a much longer, more ambitious, and more thickly populated novel than

the simple Northanger Abbey. Obviously, this novel is Jane's first publication and hence it suffers from certain flaws of scenes, characters and symbolic details. It does not open in a striking fashion just as the other novels do, and begins to narrate the pitiable conditions of the recently widowed Mrs. Dashwood and her daughters and of the inadequate provision made for them by the will of her husband's uncle. The novelist tells us that the nineteen year old Elinor commands a remarkable sense of judgement and stability, and that her sister Marianne is impetuous by nature and has a romantic sensibility like her monther, Mrs. Dashwood. In the first Chapter, Jane reports of the varying reactions of these characters over the death of Mr. Henry Dashwood. Mrs. Dashwood is clearly upset, for her husband had offered the house to his only son, John Dashwood (born of a former marriage amply provided for). Elinor is all fortitude, and possesses "a strength of understanding, and coolness of judgement, which qualified her.....to be the counsellor of her mother."³⁶ Marianne is also sensible and clever and curious by nature, but she is not prudent and moderate and in this matter she resembles her mother - "The resemblance between her and her mother was strikingly great."³⁷ The third sister called Margaret is "a good-humoured, well disposed girl"³⁸ but in her advanced age she grwos romantic and imprudent.

In the next, Mrs. John Dashwood alongwith a child installs herself mistress of Norland, having degraded her mother-in-law and sisters-in-laws to the position of visitors. She does not approve of the good intentions of her husband towards his sisters and mothers, though earlier he had promised to make them comfortable. The entire chapter is satiric and ironical, since Mr. John eventually veers round the idea, alongwith his young wife, that 'money' is a great asset to a man and that he will not give £3000 to his mother and sisters for their support. To his dying father he had given the word to assist them, but presently on the persuasion of his

worldly wise wife he comes to believe that the money once parted with can't return and that their little son, Harry, will regret that so large a sum was parted with."³⁹ From \$3000 he comes down to £500 only, and yet he does not want to 'do anything mean.'⁴⁰ He finally offers to help his mother and sisters to find a house and to visit them occasionally with, presents of fish and game. But he does nothing to help them, and turns out to be a hen-pecked husband. Money plays a vital role in this novel, as in other works of Miss Austen: 'A reader may find Marianne too romantic to think about money, but Elinor is always conscious of the Ferrars family's disapproval of her as a possible wife for Edward Ferrars, because she could bring only £1000 for him. And Edward is the eldest son of 'a man who had died very rich.' Here Jane's own problems, especially economic ones, have cropped up.

The two sisters - Elinor and Marianne - are frequently, and sometimes they appear to be mere "personifications of opposed qualities."⁴¹ Similarly their two sisters - Edward Ferrars (Fanny Dashwood's brother) and Willoughby, a poor man indeed, make a corresponding contrast. Chapter III and IV serve to kindle love between Elinor and Edward, and in Chapter XI she longs for his company at a place like Devon. Chapter IX - XV highlight the first meeting of Marianne and Willoughby and then sudden departure of the latter to an undisclosed destination, leaving the former and her family in great misery, Chapter XVI - XXIV informs Edward's prolonged silence and Lucy Steele's confidential revelation to Elinor of Edward's secret engagement to her four years ago. The scene then shifts to London, where Marianne meets her lover Willoughby, who turns down her earnest appeals and renders her totally deserted and depressed. Once again, the action returns to Elinor and her trials and tribulations because of Anne Steele's disclosure of the Lucy - Edward engagement (XXXIII - X(I)). The obvious

result is that Mrs. Ferrars disinherits Edward in favour of his younger brother Robert. Then, we have Marianne's serious illness and Willoughby's dash from London to her. Willoughby tells Elinor about his dread of poverty, which compels him to leave her sister (X/II - X/IV). His candour and repentance makes Elinor mild. When Willoughby disappears from the life of Marianne, Colonel Brandon steps in. The Colonel is her mute admirer, and he gets a clear line to reveal his love for her. He is also angry with Willoughby to have seduced Marianne, who happens to be his first love. The same Colonel earlier benefits Edward Ferrars by offering him a living, and the offer is ironically conveyed by Elinor herself. The living, Elinor thinks, may enable Edward to marry Lucy Steele. On the other hand, Edward thinks that Elinor is going to marry the Colonel. He, however, thanks both Elinor and Brandon. Soon Elinor hears from a servant that Lucy and Edward are married. The news turns Elinor pale and Marianne hysterical.

Soon after this, Edward comes to the house of the Dashwoods and informs them that Lucy has married his brother Robert (a rich man indeed). Elinor bursts into 'tears of Joy'. Immediately, Edward proposes to her and she accepts it happily. Edward then tells his entire story to her, - a story that is totally contrasted to Willoughby's.

A glamorous girl like Lucy does not marry him because he is not so rich as his younger brother. The message of marriage sent by Lucy is a handiwork of her cleverness. At the close of the novel, all ends well, Elinor is rewarded for her forbearance, intelligence, and self-possession. Edward is deeply touched by "the self-restraint she needs to exercise"⁴² in order to control the whole situation. She proves to be a prof. to her mother and sister Marianne. The novelist reports to us that Marianne is finally married to a somewhat aged yet rich Colonel Brandon and happily settled, forgetting the past like a dream. The

third sister, Margaret, is actually not properly fitted in the plot of the novel. According to Robert Liddell, "Margaret has been invented to be a companion to Mrs Dashwood."⁴³ (her mother).

Now, about the title of the novel there are two terms in the title - 'sense' and 'sensibility' and they are to be understood in a proper perspective. The commentary Sir Walter Scott throws some light on its title and content.

Sense and Sensibility..... contains the history of two sisters. The elder, a young lady of prudence and regulated feelings, becomes gradually attached to a man of an excellent heart and limited talents, who happens unfortunately to be fettered by a rash and ill-assorted engagement. In the younger sister, the influence of sensibility and imagination predominates; and she, as was to be expected also falls in love, but with more unbridled and wilful passion. Her lover, gifted with all the qualities of exterior polish and vivacity, proves faithless and marries a woman of large fortune.⁴⁴

Mr. Scott thinks that the elder sister, Elinor, - is not only a support to herself in her trying days but also to her sister Marianne during her duress. In this novel if Marianne stands for 'sensibility' (largely romantic), Elinor embodies 'sense'. That's why Elinor has been treated "as a mere foil to Marianne" and as "uninteresting".⁴⁵ Obviously, she is not so well created as Marianne, who looks to be life-like and vivacious. Elinor at times appears dull and dismayed, suffering inwardly acutely from the pangs of love and unfulfilment. But she is always trustworthy in "her coolness of judgements, her unselfishness in all the common offices of civility, and her quiet stoicism in her disappointed love: a composure of mind....., the opposite of Marianne's selfish abandonment to sorrow."⁴⁶ Edward's secret engagement to Lucy is a matter of mystery to Elinor as well as to the reader, and it is this which causes much pain and

anguish to the otherwise composed girl. But with Lucy's preference for Robert, this mystery is set at rest and the hero and the heroine are reconciled. Credit goes to Elinor for having maintained a rational and sensible approach to the problems of life, and in this she becomes representative of Jane Austen herself.

As for Marianne, her 'sensibility' is mainly a 'literary joke' (as Leavis puts it). Many of her aberrations are 'to be attributed to her aesthetic notions.'⁴⁷ She lays great stress on the feelings, in herself and in others. She is greatly interested in Cowper, and her objects of 'taste' are always noble, - nobler than "bonnets, young men and the novels of Mrs. Radcliffe."⁴⁸ But her manner of speaking is almost as exaggerated as Isabella Thorpe's gush in Northanger abbey. She is definitely sincere in her feelings and dealings with others. It is a matter of pity that Willoughby, a man of some culture, betrays her at a crucial moment, and he betrays her for more money and fortune. Marianne's departure for London to meet Willoughby that is actually prompted by her inexperience and passion (or 'almost animal emotion', as George Moore calls it). Her passion at the moment is as feverish and physical as influenza. She returns to Barton with a good deal of sorrow and self-scrutiny. There is no reason to believe that Mr. Willoughby feels happier with any other woman. Then Marianne is not that wicked in nature and has the protection of her entire family. The noted critic, Robert Liddell, rightly suggests that there are two reasons restricting the novelist to allow a heroine's fall from virtue: first, good taste (which does not permit her to give a 'shock' to her readers) and secondly good manners (which will not let readers to meet a fallen woman')⁴⁹. That's why Lydia Bennet is Pride and Prejudice is only partly forgiven for her offence after she gets married. But Maria in Mansfield Park is not received at the Park after her divorce. As a social comedy Sense and Sensibility fortunately ends on a happy note.

The main characters in this novel can be classified by the criteria of 'sense' and 'sensibility'. Elinor and Colonel Brandon possess an exemplary soundness of head & heart. Edward's goodness is quite rational and steadfast, though his loveless engagement is somewhat perplexing to Elinor. But Marianne is a creature of excessive and self-centred sensibility. Her mother, Mrs. Dashwood and her counterpart Mrs. Jennings have "an instinctive goodness of heart alongwith their shortcomings in sense or taste."⁵⁰ They are just like Marianne in nature. Many other characters like Willoughby, Lucy Steele, John and Fanny Dashwood, Mrs. Ferrar and her son Robert are, more or less, satirical portraits, suffering from one or the other short-coming. We witness the vulgarity of spirit and the vacancy of mind in the Steele sisters, Sir John and Lady Middleton, Mrs. Palmer and her rude husband, and the boisterous Mrs. Jennings.

In Sense and Sensibility, style is of great importance to show the marked moral and cultural differences. Lucy is called 'illiterate' by Elinor. Anne Steele is vulgar in her speech. Similarly, the speech of Mrs. Palmer, Mrs. Jennings and Robert Ferrars is crude and vile. But Elinor, Marianne and Willoughby usually speak better English. At times Elinor's talks sound like those of schoolmistress, and her sisters' bookish and stilted. Irony plays a vital role in this novel, both in "the pattern of the plot and its conclusion."⁵¹ A fine example of irony is to be had in the scene where Elinor helps Lucy with her filigree basket.

(C) Pride and Prejudice (1813)

This novel, originally titled First Impressions, was written between October 1796 and August 1797, according to a note of Cassandra Austen. It was also cast in the epistolary form, like Sense and Sensibility. In November 1797, George Austen wrote to Cadell, a London publisher, offering it for publication and informing him that it was "about the length of Miss Burney's Evelina. But the

publisher showed no interest in it.

The original title, First Impressions, carried a special connotation of immediate surrender to sensibility - love at first sight.⁵² In a general sense the title was suitably changed to Pride and Prejudice in order to accommodate the strong notions of the hero and heroine towards each other. At least a dozen authors had used the phrase 'pride and prejudice' in the eighteenth century before Jane Austen took it up for her own novel. The most immediate impact upon her was the use of this phrase thrice by Fanny Burney in her Cecilia (1782) in the last chapter. Like Sense and Sensibility, this novel contains the story of two mutually devoted sisters, who eventually make happy marriages.

Not only the title is derived from Fanny Burney, but the content is also patterned after her. In Pride and Prejudice as in Cecilia, the story is that of a girl who is not encouraged by an aristocratic lover's family. Elizabeth Bennet is confronted by the hero's aunt, Lady Catherine, (not by his mother). It has been suggested that Mr. Collins is "as piece of pure parody of Fanny Burney."⁵⁹ Very skilfully Jane Austen blends burlesque and realism here, and Mr. Collins is a frictional creation from the real life of her cousin, the Rev. Edward Cooper.

The story of this novel is simple enough. The hero, Mr Darcy, is a young man of large fortune and fashionable manners and his distinguishing trait is personal pride. The heroine Elizabeth Bennet from the very beginning, conceives a strong prejudice against Darcy. Elizabeth shows great spirit and consistency in the novel. But Mr. Darcy is not so. The latter's fashionable indifference suddenly changes into ardent love.

The opening sentence of the novel strikes a key note to its theme and tone: "It is a truth universally

acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife."⁵⁴ Immediately after, Mrs. Bennet informs her husband about the arrival of Mr. Bingley in the neighbourhood. She insists upon Mr. Bennet to visit the rich and dignified Bingley. Mr. Bennet goes to see his neighbour next morning, and his wife grows eloquent over it, for she looks forward to getting one of her five daughters married to him: "But consider your daughters. Only think what an establishment it would be for one of them..."⁵⁵ Evidently, Mrs. Bennet is selfish and garrulous, while her husband is thorough gentle with a calm reserve. They are certainly an ill-suited couple living in a competitive marriage-market.

Pride and Prejudice has a more dramatic romance between the hero and the heroine than the other novels (where 'love' is the starting point for the story). Elizabeth Bennet and Fitzwilliam Darcy meet at a ball, where he speaks disparingly about her. His wild 'pride' spurs her 'prejudice' against him. She narrates the story of her meeting with Darcy narrates with a good deal of fun, for "she had a lively playful disposition which delighted in anything ridiculous."⁵⁶ She declares that Darcy "has a very satirical eye, and if I do not begin by being impertinent myself, I shall soon grow afraid of him."⁵⁷ Elizabeth has 'wit and vivacity', which enable her to feel at par with Darcy or with his aunt. Lady Catherine de Bourgh, who is not well inclined towards Miss Bennet. The noted critic, John Hardy, has correctly pointed out that "By giving free rein to her lively intelligence, she [Elizabeth] forces Darcy to converse with her as an equal"⁵⁸ She seizes every opportunity to make Darcy's words and manners the target of her wit. She thus compels him to 'correct' himself and not to adopt 'the air of aloof superiority.'⁵⁹

The Bennets lived at that time in a country house at Longbourn, which is barely a mile away from Meryton (the

town). The young ladies usually pay visits to Meryton for various social engagements as well as for shopping. The neighbourhood is large and sprawling, and the Bennets occasionally 'dine with four and twenty families.' Strangely enough, only three of these families are mentioned here - the Gouldings of Haye Park, Mrs. Long and her nieces, and the family of Sir William Lucas. Elizabeth's mother belongs to Maryton, but her father to the country. Of the two, her mother is more sociable and cleverer.

Of all the heroines of Jane Austen, Elizabeth is "the most captivating."⁶⁰ She belongs to a family far below the social status of Darcy. She does not have 'high connections', so to speak. Her ill-bred mother and charming younger sisters and her uncle Philips, a Meryton attorney, and his wife do not further, in any way, her chance of marrying a man of higher rank of social class. As contrasted to her is Darcy, who is regarded as 'the most exalted of Jane Austen's heroes.'⁶¹ The yawning gulf between him and Elizabeth is actually a fact of contemporary life. It is not that the gulf permanently separates the hero from the heroine. But their interest in each other is built slowly and slowly. During her sister Jane's illness, the heroine goes to Netherfield as a muse for a few days and there her wit and vivacity catch the attention of Darcy, who recognises her as a dangerous attraction and Elizabeth turns more indifferent to Darcy than positively hostile and inimical.

In such a situation, Wickman appears on the scene and Elizabeth is drawn by his elegant looks and manners. He is the son of the Steward of Darcy's father's estate, and speaks ill of Darcy and his consuming pride. Elizabeth's complete trust in Wickham is unimaginable, but it appears that in doing so she is almost blinded by her prejudice. Even her sister, Jane, can't trust him so fully. Meanwhile, Jane has fallen in love with Mr. Bingley, but her elder sister is still uncertain about her future. Eliza meets Darcy next at Hunsford while visiting Mr. and Mrs. Collins.

Darcy has come to his aunt, Lady Catherine. Here Darcy talks to Eliza amiably, and her sprightliness thrals him inescapably. Therefore, Darcy visits the parsonage frequently and seeks to meet her there. Eliza simply laughs at her friend Charlotte's idea that Darcy is falling in love with her. And Darcy discloses his mind and love to Eliza, who reacts sharply over it and becomes angry. Later, Darcy delivers a long letter of self-defence, clarifying therein that Wickham has received greater generosity and assistance from his than he deserves it, that this dissolute man has tried in vain to run away with his rich young sister. This strange incident brings him at par with her own family affairs, for Lydia has also disgraced the Bennet family in a similar manner. So, Darcy's strictures on her family recoil upon him too. Both are repentant over their behaviour towards each other. She is highly ashamed of herself. Henceforth, she forsakes her 'prejudice' and becomes somewhat 'benevolent'. She is rather greatful to him for his attachment and respects his overall character.

Eliza and Darcy meet next at Pemberly. She finds him quite altered in his manners - and thoughts. She moves and lives there in the midst of presentable relations. This also shows her taste. The tour of rooms with the housekeeper dispels Eliza's doubts about Darcy's exemplary goodness towards Wickham, whose own 'wild' and uncontrolled life has proved a bane - rather, a ruin - for him. Eliza meets Darcy soon after coming out of the house. Both of them are a bit confused at this unexpected meeting. Eliza is with Mr. Gardiner, whom she calls 'uncle', and her friends. Darcy wants to be introduced to them. He even invites Mr. Gardiner to fish whenever he likes. Eliza is somewhat surprised.

Next day, Darcy brings his sister and Bingley to the Gardiner. Eliza comes to feel that Bingley is not in love with Miss Darcy but is still in love with Jane. In the evening, Eliza expresses her gratitude to Darcy for his persisting with his ardent love for her.

In Chapters X/VI - X/III, the novelist reports about the shocking elopement of Lydia with Wickham from Brighton. The news reaches Eliza and her friends, including Darcy, through a letter from Jane. They are terribly upset over it. Eliza watches Darcy with anxiety for she believes that the news must extinguish his love for her. She develops understanding and love for him.

At the instance of Darcy, Wickham and Lydia are married. Eliza comes to know of it through Mrs. Gardiner. She feels that Darcy must have undergone a good deal of trouble and expense (in the bribing of Wickham), and that he has done all this for her sake. This changes her heart for him, but she has yet to see that Darcy renews his proposal.

In the meantime, Jane and Bingley are reunited with the approval of Darcy. Lady Catherine, the imposing aunt of Darcy, is still opposed to his idea of marrying Elizabeth. The Lady travels to Longtown to browbeat Elizabeth and to extort a promise from her that she will turn down the offer of her nephew. The confrontation between the two women of unbendings resolve is one of the Jane Austen's stirring scenes.⁶² And as we know, Elizabeth does not yield in this matter.

A few days later, Eliza meets Darcy alone and thanks him heartily for his 'generous compassion' shown in regard to Lydia. This at once leads to the renewal of his proposal. Eliza accepts it gratefully, and Darcy becomes delighted over it.

Clearly enough, Eliza moulds Darcy to a great extent, just as Darcy moulds Bingley in a considerable way. Critics like R.A. Brower and Mudrick have charged that Jane Austen is not able to maintain the double or multiple vision in the last third of the novel. That is true, but it is the need of the plot. After all, the tension between the hero and heroine can not continue till the very end, and it has to be resolved into a harmonious relationship in a

comedy (that Pride and Prejudice is). Moreover, there is no stooping for Darcy or Elizabeth if they express their love for each other. Of the two, however, it is Eliza who dominates the proceedings of the novel throughout. It is she who educates him and 'humanizes' him.⁶³ In the words of John Hardy, the critic, "By her behaviour she fashions him into a fitting companion for herself, for Darcy has the discrimination and responsiveness to rise to the challenge."⁶⁴ Speaking of her dignified character Marvin Mudrick has remarked as follows: "If the novel does not collapse in the predictabilities of the denouncement, it is because Elizabeth has from the outset been presented in a depth specific and vital enough to resist flattening...."⁶⁵

Finally, Pride and Prejudice is a much better artistic creation than Northanger Abbey, and it decidedly steals a march over Sense and Sensibility, in matters of plot, structure, characterization, masterly use of irony and burlesque, blend of wit and humour, and subtlety of feeling. If Wickham is odious and evil, Lydia is robustly animalistic and passionate. If Mrs. Bennet is even on the search of husbands for her grown-up daughters, Lady Catherine is haughty and arrogant enough to wreck all marriage-plans. The spirit of Jane Austen's burlesque survives in characters like Mrs. Bennet, Mr. Collins and Lady Catherine. How happy Mrs. Bennet looks to be at the end of the novel for the simple reason that she gets rid of her two most deserving daughters: "With what delighted pride she afterwards visited Mrs. Bingley, and talked of Mrs. Darcy, may be guessed."⁶⁶ Even some of the minor characters get the quick yet lively brush of the artist Jane, e.g. Miss Bingley and Miss Darcy. It is a rare feat no doubt, more so because "it is so difficult to balance a purely ironic vision with credible presentation of a man and woman undergoing a serious change of sentiment."⁶⁷ Such a broad vision of society and its manners can't be generally found in the whole length and breadth of English fiction.

(D) Mansfield Park (1814)

This novel was begun about February 1811, finished in the summer of 1813, and was published in May 1814. Other novels were actually the revised versions of Jane Austen's earlier works, which were mostly cast in the epistolary form, but this one was her first novel originally written in the narrative form. This novel is laden with "a strain of moral seriousness"⁶⁸ that was not witnessed in earlier novels. It is no more light and bright and sparkling, as Pride and Prejudice is. Instead of 'Candour', which we find in Sense and Sensibility and Pride and Prejudice, we find 'moral earnestness' in it. It is free from irony and burlesque. Lionel Trilling thinks that it is "a great novel, its greatness being commensurate with its power to offend."⁶⁹ Another critic Mrs.Q.D.Leavis opines that it is "the first modern novel in England"⁷⁰ But Kingley Amis does not share this kind of view, and remarks that "the character of Fanny (the heroine) lacks self-knowledge, generosity and humility..... Instead it is a monster of complacency and pride who, under a cloak of cringing self-abasement, dominates and gives meaning to the novel."⁷¹ Obviously, the last-named critic does not approve of its 'moral concerns'.

Mansfield Park is an analytical novel and attempts to maintain the moral values in society as well as in individuals. The earlier works like Sense and Sensibility and Pride and Prejudice were also concerned with the question of maintaining moral values, but here the novelist has ostensibly turned ethical and didactic. For this reason, Charles Austen complained that Mansfield Park 'Wanted Incident.'

The novel under review deals with the story of Edmund Bertram and Fanny Price - the hero and the heroine respectively. The Bertram family represents landed gentry. Fanny is one of the children of Lady Bertram's sister (who was unahppily married to a Lieutenant of Marines). and

though she belongs to a low family in Portsmouth she is removed from there to be brought up among the young Bertrams in comfort and luxury. Right from the age of ten, she is destined to live in grand style at the place known as Mansfield Park with its "genteel society".⁷² The novel derives its title from a proper place - name.

At the beginning of the novel, Jane Austen ironically presents the commercial view of marriage in her time: "About thirty years ago, Miss Maria Ward, of Huntingdon, with only seven thousand pounds, had the good luck to captivate Sir Thomas Bertram, of Mansfield Park, in the country of Northampton, and to be thereby raised to the rank of a baronet's lady, with all the comforts and consequences of an handsome house and large income."⁷³ This sentence convinces the reader that Jane is perhaps out to write another satirical comedy like Pride and Prejudice and Emma, but as he proceeds with the story, particularly after the introduction of Henry and Mary Crawford, he senses "deeper conflicts of personality and outlook than the lighter comedies explore."⁷⁴

The first three chapters of the novel are introductory in nature. Here the novelist introduces various characters of interest, such as the aristocratic Sir Thomas Bertram, the calm and indolent lady Bertram (or Maria Bertram), the self-centred and aggressive Mrs. Norris (or Mrs. Ward Norris, one of the two sisters of Maria, the second being Miss Frances), and the ten-year-old child Fanny and the sixteen-year-old cousin Edmund Bertram. The older ones are busy sorting out the problem of bringing up Fanny. In the third chapter, Fanny grows to be sixteen and passes most of her time with Lady Bertram. Meanwhile, Sir Thomas Bertram goes out to Antigua alongwith his elder son, Tom, in order to safeguard his interest. Now, Edmund becomes the temporary head of the house. With the departure of Sri Thomas, his two daughters named Maria and Julia feel immense freedom. They are so highly critical of the 'ignorance' of Fanny -- "But, aunt, she is really so very ignorant!"⁷⁵. Of the two girls, Maria attracts Mr. Rushworth, a young and rich yet

foolish person with a dwelling in town. She is young and charming. Her brother, Edmund does not like encouragement to Mr.Rushworth.

When Fanny is seventeen, the agents of trouble called Henry and Mary Crawford appear as guests of Dr. and Mrs.Grant. They are the half-brother and half-sister of Mrs.Grant (the parson's wife). They are brought up by their uncle Admiral Crawford and his wife. But the death of Mrs.Craford prompts the Admiral to instal his mistress in his house, forcing thereby Henry and Many to come to Mansfield Park. The scheming Mrs. Grant veers round the idea that her newly-arrived sister should marry Julia Bertram. The idea is received by Mary with a mixed feeling, and she is ready to like Tom. Henry also makes himself agreeable to Julia. By and by, Mary draws closer to Edmund, and both admire each other. This worries Fanny, however, as a young woman, Mary is very charming, and her brother Henry is captivating. Both are clever and intelligent, and both are good-natured.

The Sotherton expedition and the prolonged business of staging a play are action-packed episodes in the novel. They help to create situations in which young men and women - at least three pairs of them - come together and interact with one another. It is, however, equally true that nobody except Mrs. Norris emerges happy out of these episodes. Another thing to be noted is that Henry carries on with both Julia and Maria in gay abandon, and that restraint of any kind is alien to him. These two episodes have generally been criticized as 'theatricals' by readers and scholars. At the end of the second episode, Julia informs the party that her father, Sir Thomas, has come back home.

Sir Thomas greets Fanny with greater kindness and understanding. He is evidently not happy with the staging of the play and with the re-setting of rooms in the house. Edmund praises Fanny for her cool mind. Sir Thomas sees

through Mr. Rushworth's stupidity and asks his daughter Maria whether she would like 'to be released' from an unhappy bond. But Maria quietens her father on this count. She feels that Henry is the man who has snatched 'her happiness but she will maintain her composure: "Henry Crawford had destroyed her happiness, but he should not know that he had done it; he should not destroy her credit, her appearance, her prosperity, too."⁷⁶ She strives henceforth to achieve independence and escape from the Mansfield atmosphere, even if it means the acceptance of Mr. Rushworth. She leaves Mansfield Park as the wife of Mr. Rushworth.

The story relates on Fanny and Edmund Mary, and Henry hereafter. Fanny has to suffer for the time being on account of the growing intimacy between Mary and Edmund, though temperamental the latter are quite opposed. Mary desires money and rank, while Edmund enters the holy ordination. Besides, Fanny becomes a prominent person at the Park and the parsonage. She is also the favourite of Sir Thomas, who arranges a ball in honour of her and her brother William. The brother, who is on a visit to the Park from Sicily, offers Fanny an amber cross to wear, while Mary forces a necklace upon her (a gift from Henry), and Edmund buys a chain for her. The pitch is further queered when Henry announces, on his return from London, that he is "quite determined to marry Fanny Price."⁷⁷ To hear this, Mary is quite surprised, but later she is satisfied. Fanny is happy over the promotion of her brother through the Admiral's influence. She hears this news from Henry, who immediately proclaims his love for her. Fanny does not like it and refuses his proposal. The refusal annoys Sir Thomas too. Fanny is not prepared to her anything in favour of Henry either from Lady Bertram or from Edmund. She is, however, inwardly distressed to find that Edmund and Mary are near marriage, and that she has not been able to overcome her serious faults.

Presently William pays a visit to the Bertrams and is advised by Sir Thomas to take Fanny back home. The brother brings her to parents, but she is not happy there. Her mother is lazy and incompetent and her father is coarse and alcoholic, as usual. The only person whom Fanny can love and help here is her elder sister, Susan. The ever-seeking Henry traces her out, and reaches her in a bid to win her over. Fanny hopes that good sense will prevail over Henry, and he will quit his unfruitful wooing.

In the meantime, Henry and Mary curiously visit the Rushworths. Maria greets Henry coolly. Tom Bertram returns home with a serious fever. Fanny through hears a scandalous rumour about Henry and Maria, she does not believe init. The elopment of 'Mrs. R.' and 'Mr. C' is reported in a newspaper. This incident is like the elopment of Lydia and Wickham in Pride and Prejudice. Sir Thomas and Edmund are deeply shocked over it, and to add insult to injury the news of Julia's elopment with Mr. Yeats comes to them. Edmund now decides to go to Postsmouth to bring back Fanny, and Sir Thomas sends for Susan.

When Fanny comes back to Mansfield Park, Edmund tells her about his disillusionment with Mary, who puts the blame of Fanny-Henry separation on him. He also tells her that Mary holds good opinion of Fanny. In turn Fanny informs Edmund that Tom's serious ailment and the possibility of his becoming the heir to the Bertram estate should have brought a 'smile' on Mary's face. After all, Mary is a woman of taste and fashion.

The last chapter begins with the controversial commentary of the novelist herself: "Let other pens dwell on guilt and misery. I quit such odious subjects as soon as I can, impatient to restore everybody, not greatly in fault themselves, to tolerable comfort and to have done with all the rest."⁷⁸ Naturally, so long Jane Austen has been

preoccupied with 'guilt' and 'misery', and now she wants to restore everybody, who is faultless and innocent, to 'tolerable comfort'. Such a statement is called 'half-serious', half-jocular", it is probably inspired, as Prof. Norman Page puts it, by a consideration of 'emotional security and tranquillity.'⁷⁹ Mr Rushworth seeks a divorce from Maria. Mr. Yeats and Julia try to get somehow reconciled with Sir Thomas, who is "conscious of errors in his own conduct as a parent", and who is "the longest to suffer."⁸⁰ Mrs. Norris gets disgusted with Fanny's elation and decides to leave Mansfield Park for good. This gives great satisfaction to Sir Thomas, for he is not happy with her as an educator of his two daughters. Dr. Grant and Mrs. Grant also go away from Mansfield Park to a London home and live there with Mary, who is still beautiful and resourceful (with her 20,000 pounds). Edmund tries to forget Mary and wants to marry Fanny at the earliest - "Edmund did cease to care about Miss Crawford, and became as anxious to marry Fanny as Fanny herself could desire."⁸¹ Both get married, and are happy in their domestic life.

Broadly speaking, Mansfield Park is didactic in nature. Bad education is obviously the central theme of his novel. This applies particularly to the Bertrams whose two daughters went astray in social and moral matters. They are left in the care of Mrs. Norris, who is herself disconsolate and ill-educated. Similarly Henry and Mary have though intelligence and good nature are born and bred in an unwholesome atmosphere. Tom is usually shallow and spendthrift; Mr. Rushworth is a country fool; and Mrs. Yeats is a town fool. They are all creatures of impulse and erring judgement. Of course, Fanny and Edmund are made of different stuff. Fanny has "some earmarks of the heroine of sensibility" with an appreciable "moral consciousness."⁸² Edmund has accepted ordination, and is sober by temperament. Though Fanny remains in the background upto half of the story, she comes into prominence in the second half of it.

She is a heroine of the self-effacing type, is quite contrasted to the glamorous Mary. She serves as a guide for Edmund and brings him out of an air of depression when Mary rejects him. She is his liberator and his torch-bearer. According to Douglas Bush, "initiates corrective conservatism Mansfield Park remains true to the traditional ethos of comedy."⁸³ Another critic, John Hardy remarks that this novel "appeals to attract concepts" rather than brings out subtle judgement." and "social and personal relationships."⁸⁴ And Robert Liddell observes that "Mansfield Park is a book in which she (Jane Austen) has tried new powers, has gone to the extreme limit of her wide range, and sometimes a little beyond it...."⁸⁵

(E) EMMA (1816)

This novel was begun on 21st January, 1814, and was finished on 29th March 1815. It was published early in 1816. Dr. Chapman thinks that Emma is the direct outcome of The Watsons, a fragmentary work by all means. The novel may have 'low life' in it, but it should be surveyed from "the vantage-point of the heroine."⁸⁶

Writing about this novel, Arnold Kettle remarks, "Emma is about marriage. It begins with one marriage, that of Miss Taylor, ends with three more and considers two others by the way. The subject is marriage; but not marriage in the abstract. There is nothing of the moral fable here...."⁸⁷ If Kettle's remark throws light on the subject of Emma, Marks Schorer dwells at some length on its power and greatness. The latter critic observes that: "Jane Austen's Emma, 1816 stands at the head of her achievements, and..... discriminating readers have thought the novel her greatest. Her powers here are at their fullest, her control at its most certain."⁸⁸ In the opinion of Douglas Bush, "Emma is a much more complex and subtle work of art than Pride and Prejudice."⁸⁹

Jane Austen suggested that in writing Emma she was creating a heroine whom no one but herself would 'much like'. We may assure the creature that there are many readers who 'like' her despite his repeated errors of judgement. And Mr. Knightley's interest in her later turns out to be his 'love' for her. In the very first chapter, Emma Woodhouse is described as follows:

Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her.⁹⁰

When the novel opens, we find her - "the youngest of the two daughters of a most affectionate, indulgent father."⁹¹ motherless and companionless, to be caressed by her loving governess Miss Taylor. Her elder sister is married off and gone, and so she has to look after her house. She values the opinion of her governess. Her evils, if any, are born of her given:- situation. She thinks of herself a little too well. Meanwhile, Miss Taylor marries the well-to-do Mr. Weston and goes away, though she is just half a mile away, Emma is anguished over the departure of her intimate friend-cum-governess.

Next morning, Emma's brother-in-law named George Knightley, a gentleman-farmer of large village, Highbury. They talk about the wedding of Miss Taylor with Mr. Weston and Emma is proved of having 'made the match'. But Mr. Knightley refutes her by saying that Mr. and Mrs. Weston made the match themselves. At last, Emma declares that she must find a wife for the Highbury Vicar, Mr. Elton, and her brother-in-law warns her against the venture.

During her visit to the Woodhouses, Mrs. Goddard brings one Miss Harriot Smith, 'the natural daughter of somebody, whom Emma discovers to be beautiful but foolish

and whom she wants to develop into a graceful creature. Emma immediately thinks that she has found a suitable wife for Mr. Elton. The first thing that Emma does towards educating Harriet is to detach her from the Martins, an agricultural family, who are supposedly 'coarse and unpolished'. But Harriet has already developed warm feelings for Mr. Robert Martin, a young tenant of Mr. Knightley. Emma tells her ward that Mr. Robert will probably marry a mere farmer's daughter, having no education. In running down Mr. Martin, Emma tries to promote Mr. Elton.

In Chapter V, Mr. Knightley and Mrs. Weston are seen discussing the conduct of Miss Emma. Mr. Knightley is critical of her cleverness and self-deception, while Mrs. Weston defends her indulgently. However, they agree on the point that Emma is healthy and beautiful. Mr. Knightley, observes that 'I love to look at her'. The Elton episode (IV - XVII) also comes up for a discussion between them.

As an instance of sparkling irony, the reader finds that while Emma is wholeheartedly promoting the Elton-Harriet relationship, Elton is actually interested in Emma. The wise John Knightley, the brother Mr. Knightley, notices this fact and reveals it to Emma. Later, she herself is surprised when Mr. Elton pours forth "the most ardent profession of love."⁹² She is angered by this behaviour. She indulges in self-introspection and blames herself for the mess. The whole episode is immensely charged with irony and comedy. The climax of comedy is reached when Mr. Elton proposes to Emma.

The story reveals Mr. Knightley's jealousy of Mr. Frank Churchill, a dashing young man of gentle manners, just as it also unfolds Miss Emma's competitive jealousy of Miss Jane Fairfax. In the mean-time, Frank Churchill appears on the scene, and becomes familiar with Emma. Frank, who is acquainted with Miss Fairfax, mentions her once, but he does

not reveal any intimacy with her. In Emma's eyes, Frank is handsome and talkative, but she is badly shaken in her opinion of him when the very next day he dashes to London to have his hair cut in style.

The dinner hosted by the Coles in the neighbourhood provides a chance to bring Frank, Jane, Mr. Elton, Mr. Knightley, and Emma together. At the door, Emma meets Mr. Knightley and congratulates him on coming to the party 'like a gentleman' in a carriage. Miss Fairfax is presented with a piano by Mr. Dixon. Now Emma meets Frank and talks to him freely, but the latter only nods insincerely. The party shows Jane as much superior to Emma in musical performance, and hence Mr. Knightley request her to go on singing. Mrs. Weston thinks that Mr. Knightley and Jane will make a good match, but Emma is shocked to hear so. Frank Churchill, however, pays attention to Emma and leads her to the top of the dance.

Through many chapters, the relations between Frank and Emma as well as the secret relations between Frank and Jane are developed in such a way that the story is suffused with tension. Emma even feels that Frank is involved with her and he may even propose to her.

Frank, however, does not reveal his intention till the very end of the novel. On the other hand Emma takes a decision that she will not accept his offer.

By this time, Mr. Elton has chosen his wife in Augusta Hawkins, a curious mixture of "pretension and commonness."⁹³ Mr. Elton patronizes Jane and even offers to find the job of a governess for her. In Chapter XXXVIII, at the Westons' ball organized at the Crown Inn, a few pairs (for the purposes of dance) are seen in action - Mr. Weston and Mrs. Elton, Frank and Emma, and Harriet on being snubbed by Mr. Elton is led into the set by Mr. Knightley. After the brother, the dance is resumed. A trenchant dialogue follows

between Mr. Knightley and Miss Emma, revealing their soft feelings for each other:

"I am ready", said Emma, "Whenever I am wanted."

"Whom are you going to dance with ?" asked Mr. Knightly.

She hesitated a moment, and then replies, "With you", if you will ask me."

"Will you ?" said he, offering his hand.

"Indeed I will. You have shown that you can dance, and you know that we are not really so much brother and sister as to make it at all improper."

"Brother and Sister ! - no, indeed,"⁹⁴

Through a mastery stroke of her pen, Jane Austen has unearthed the innermost feelings of the two loving souls.

The next morning, Frank appears along with Harriet, whom he has just released from the clutches of a gang of gypsies on the road. Harriet grows wiser with this incident as well as with the rude behaviour of Mr. Elton towards her. She burns the remains of Mr. Elton's recollection and forgets him for good. She declares that she will never marry because she loves a man of higher station. Meanwhile it becomes known to Mr. Knightley that Frank and Jane are in correspondence with each other. He tells Emma about it, but she does not believe him.

The two picnics to Donwell Abbey and Box Hill make lovers sick and tired. Emma is happy to be with Mr. Knightley, but Frank joins the party and spoils the merriment through his flattery of Emma. Because of this Jane is angry with Frank. The Elton also drive away in a morose mood. When Emma is going back home, Mr. Knightley escorts her to her carriage. As a mentor, he rebukes her severely for her bad behaviour towards Miss Bates. Emma takes his words seriously and feels greatly agitated and aggrieved.

Tears start rolling down her cheeks almost all the way home. Since then, the reader witnesses a clear change of her heart. She now resorts to self-analysis and self-criticism. She resolves to call on Miss Bates, whom Mr. Knightley regards as a woman of 'character, age and situation'. At first, Miss Bates is not at ease, but later she becomes cordial.

There are, then, departures of characters. Jane accepts the post of governess that Mr. Elton has found for her. Frank Churchill has gone to his father's, and Mr. Knightley is going to London to see his brother John and his family. Before his departure, Mr. Knightley calls on the Woodhouses. Emma's father tells him that his daughter has been to the Bateses. Mr. Knightley is still not sure about Emma's love, and he thinks that she is in the grip of Mr. Frank. But this is not a proper reading of Emma's character.

The news reaches Highbury that Mrs. Churchill, whose foster-child Mr. Frank is, has passed away. Emma now hopes that Harriet will be able to capture Frank. But Harriet has no such intention. Miss Jane declines Emma's offer of kind help to her. In the meantime, the Westons inform Emma that Jane and Frank are secretly engaged. Emma is simply stunned by Frank's double-dealing, and she fully understands the position of Jane. She is much concerned about her Harriet, who gives her another jolt by disclosing her liking for Mr. Knightley (in preference to Mr. Frank). Obviously, Emma is put to a severe test. She plunges in self-searching and blames herself for not permitting Harriet to marry the man of her choice - Mr. Robert Martin and for rendering her vainglorious. Her remorse is great, and her sense of sorrow is insurmountable. She gives up all hopes of a good and happy marriage.

But the next afternoon, clouds over Emma's head disappear and the bright sun is visible. She comes out to

enjoy the freshness of the garden after the rain. At that very moment, Mr. Knightley returns from London and comes to Emma, who informs him about the engagement of Frank and Jane. But Mr. Knightley has an inkling about it, and thinks that Frank is fortunate to have a good wife at the age of twenty-three. With Frank out of reach, Mr. Knightley wants to know about his own prospect with her. Emma is overjoyed with his proposal, but is very sorry for Harriet. Apart from Harriet, her father is another problem for her. Emma presently receives a long letter of Frank passed on to her by Mrs. Weston. The letter partly absolves Frank from the sin of duplicity in his dealings with others, particularly with Emma.

The last few chapters bring a happy resolution to the various threads of the story. The problem of looking after Emma's father is solved by Mr. Knightley himself, who offers to reside at Hartfield as long as the old man is alive. Mr. Woodhouse is won over. Mr. Knightley is also instrumental in uniting Harriet with Mr. Robert Martin. With this solution, Emma too is quite happy. The Westons admire the match of Emma and Mr. Knightley, but the Eltons are critical of it. Emma establishes a cordial relationship with Jane Fairfax. The novel ends up with the authorial note on the wedding of Emma and Knightley. There is no display of finery or parade init, and yet "the wishes, the hopes, the confidence, the predictions of the small band of true friends who witnessed the ceremony, were fully answered in the perfect happiness of the union."⁹⁵

(F) PERSUASION (1818)

This novel was begun in August 1815 and finished in a year (exactly in August 1816). Jane Austen's health was failing in those days. It was published by her brother Henry in early 1818, after the death of the authoress. It was published alongwith Northanger Abbey. Writing about Persuasion, Robert Liddell remarks thus: "The Cinderella

theme had always been a favourite with Jane Austen; and there are other subjects in this book that might have been written up from early sketches, such as happy, unintellectual Musgrove family, and the naval world of the Hervilles and the Crafts. All such things might be about in the author's mind or in her notebooks, until she discovered the history of Anne Elliot; and then the Spirit blew, and they were created.⁹⁶ Another distinguished critic of Jane's novels, Andrew H. Wright comments about Persuasion in the following way:

'Those who have never read Persuasion, a sad love story with a happy ending. Here, more clearly and more sweetly than in any of the other novels, is exposed the conflict between two schemes of values; those of prudence, and those of love. Anne Elliot contains both and the result is a contradiction which causes nearly a decade of unhappiness to her; her reconciliation with Captain Wentworth stems not from the resolution of these opposites, but from a series of fortuitous circumstances which makes the match possible after all. Never, even at the end of the book, can she abandon her commitment to the prudential values, even when she is happily betrothed to Captain Wentworth. Yet she is a complete, a fully human, heroine.'⁹⁷

A third critic of repute, Margaret Kirkham, observes that in this novel "Jane Austen enlarged the scope of her fiction by creating a heroine who is strictly too old and too wise to play, the part in what is still conceived as a comedy."⁹⁸ But 'comedy' is Jane's forte, and had she lived longer she might have suitably provided the novel with "the right allusive - ironic frame within which Anne Elliot could appear...."⁹⁹

Persuasion lives as a novel "through the thoughts and feelings of its heroic Anne Elliot."¹⁰⁰ when the novel

begins, Anne does not capture the reader's notice as a dashing woman or one belonging to a rich family. Her widower father, Sir Walter Elliot, and her elder sister, Elizabeth, are both seen to be observed with 'a sense of self', while her younger sister, Mary, is given to complaining and selfishness. She is virtually ignored by these members of her family. Of the two sisters, Mary has married Charles Musgrove, who hails from "an old country family of respectability and large fortune."¹⁰¹ And Elizabeth, at the age of twenty-nine, is still looking for a suitable match, having already been disappointed by Mr. William Elliot, the heir-apparent of Sir Walter. Another important character is Lady Russell, a friendly widow living in the neighbourhood of Sir Walter, who looks upon Anne as her god-daughter. It is on this Lady's advice that Anne rejects the proposal of Captain Wentworth. She does so when she is a blooming beauty: "A few years before Anne Elliot had been a very pretty girl...."¹⁰² In the second chapter Mrs Clay, the wily daughter of Mrs Shepherd (Sir Walter's lawyer), is introduced as " a very unequal" and 'a very dangerous companion.'¹⁰³

The immediate problem of the Elliot family is to come out of the impoverished condition. Lady Russell and Anne, supported by Mr. Shepherd, decide to rent Kellynch Hall (the house of Sir Walter) to one of the coming rich naval officers, as a consequence of which Sir Walter and Elizabeth and Mrs Clay will move to Bath. Anne will join them at Bath later on. A forceful defence of navy is made by Anne, who also tried to identify the proposed tenant as Admiral Craft, whose wife is a sister of Captain Wentworth.

As regards Capt. Wentworth, he has risen in position and fortune since his rejection by Anne eight years ago. She was then barely nineteen. At the age of twenty-two, she refuses Charles Musgrove, a sportsman of position and money. At twenty-seven, she regrets her decision of rejecting such good suitors. Very soon, Capt. Wentworth

arrives at Kellynch Hall and becomes friendly with the Musgroves, including Louisa and Henrietta (the two sisters). Capt. Wentworth finds Emma much altered, though he has still not pardoned her for "Weakly yielding to persuasion and deserting him."¹⁰⁴ His interest in Emma's actions and feelings as well as her interest in him confirms their undying though unspoken love of each other. He remains civil and courteous towards her throughout. Yet he carries on his affairs with Louisa and Henrietta, especially with Louisa. Louisa informs him that Anne has rejected a proposal from her brother Charles.

The famous visit to Lyme, in chapters XI and XII, brings Anne and Wentworth together. They are soft and well-behaved, Meanwhile, Louisa falls on the ~~coch~~ and becomes unconscious. Henrietta also faints, and everyone present there gets distracted. Wentworth also feels a shock. But Anne remained heroic in such a situation, showing an exemplary "presence of mind and efficiency."¹⁰⁵ Her power of judgement prompts her to believe that Louisa and Wentworth will be engaged as soon as the injured girl recovers. Louisa is taken to the small house of Capt. Harville and his wife for nursing.

The second half of the novel (Chapter XV - XXIV) shifts the scene to Bath. Going there Anne finds that her father and elder sister are enjoying private parties, and that William Elliot has reached a happy reconciliation with the family. Mr. William who had met Anne at Lyme pays special attention to her. Lady Russell, an ill judge of persons and their situations, approves of their match. But Anne does not agree with her.

A letter comes from Mary Musgrove, announcing the engagement of Louisa and Capt. Benwick. This makes Anne to think that Capt. Wentworth is now 'free'. Capt. Wentworth comes to Bath from his brother's and Anne initiates a talk with him. She emerges a happier person from the talk because she feels that she 'must love her'.

Anne makes a number of calls on her former schooomate, Mrs. Smith, who is now a poor widow and somewhat crippled. Mrs. Smith tells her what she has around Bath about her prospective marriage with Mr. William Elliot. But Anne denies this possibility vehemently. Mrs. Smith is also not happy with Mr. Elliot, who has rendered her no help after her husband (and his friend's) death.

The scene then shifts to an inn where many of Anne's acquaintances are present - the Grafts, the Charles Musgroves, and Capt. Harville, Anne also comes to the inn. Mr. Wentworth joins them, and starts writing a letter for Harville. He casts a hurried glance at Anne in between the moments of writing. The party discusses the question of male and female constancy. Anne forcefully defends her own 'sex' in this matter, and thus becomes a champion of the feminist movement. In reply to Capt. Harville's question - "Do you claim that for your sex?" - Anne asserts smilingly:

"Yes. We certainly do not forget you so soon as you forget us. It is, perhaps, our fate rather than our merit. We can not help ourselves. We live at home, quiet, confined, and our feelings prey upon us. You are forced on exertion. You have always a profession, pursuits, business of some sort or other to take you back into the world immediately and continual occupation and change soon, weaken impression."¹⁰⁶ (Chapter XXIII)

Capt. Harville does not seem to agree with her, and suggests that men's stronger bodies can contain stronger feelings. Anne, however, again retorts by saying that though man is more robust, he is not 'longer lived.' Evidently Anne here becomes the spokeswoman of Jane Austen herself, and she succeeds admirably in putting forth "her view of the retentiveness of a woman's feeling."¹⁰⁷ Capt. Wentworth overhears Anne's robust arguments and is deeply moved. Her summing up of the woman's case reflects her own long

suffering in love. She says, "All the privilege I claim for my own sex (it is not a very enviable one, you need not covet it) is that of loving longest, when existence or when hope is gone!"

Wentworth and Anne meet outside in the street and take a walk together. They discuss the poignant feelings of the past in a happy mood. A new kind of intimacy grows between them, and in their reunion they become "more tender, more tried, more fixed in a knowledge of each other's character, truth, and attachment...."¹⁰⁹ On the gravel walk, they renew their vows of love. Anne tells him that she had rejected him previously because of the advice of Lady Russell, whom she treated as her mother. The doubts having been dispelled, the two true lovers decide to get united in wedlock. They watch each other in mind and heart. At the end of the novel, the authoress comments thus: Anne was tenderness itself, and she had the full worth of it in Captain Wentworth's affection.¹¹⁰ If she glories in being a sailor's wife, he also prides on having such a discerning and loving wife.

Miss Mary Lascelles points out that irony is "the very tongue in which Persuasion is written."¹¹¹ She rightly suggests that the true and deep feeling of Miss Anne, Capt. Wentworth and of Capt. Harville is generally poised against the false and cheap feeling of a few characters like Sir Walter, Elizabeth and Mrs. Clay. According to Robert Liddell, "This approach to her (Jane Austen's) subject guarded her from the danger of sentimentality...."¹¹² The tragic scene in which Louisa falls on the Cobb fits in the ironic pattern as it exposes her adamant nature and also signifies a 'counterfeit catastrophe' for her, particularly in her relationship with Mr. Wentworth. After all, the novelist has to bring the hero and the heroine together after a prolonged period of stress and strain. Obviously, the novel is written from the view point of the heroine, and she can't be allowed to groan perpetually with sobs and sniffles.

(G)

FRAGMENTARY NOVELS : A NOTE

Besides her six complete novels, Jane Austen has given us two fragmentary works of fiction: The Watsons and Sanditon. Of the two, The Watsons was written in 1804-1805 in about, 18,000 words. It was printed in 1870 in the Memoir of her nephew, James Edward Austen - Leigh. Various reasons have been suggested for Jane's giving up the novel: (1) she was terribly upset by her personal sorrows and unsettled life; (2) she was disheartened by the non-appearance of Susan (that is, Northanger Abbey), and (3) she was not satisfied with the movement of the story.¹¹³ The fragment received the careful attention of its creator, and is available to us in its first draft. Some scholars like Dr. Chapman have suggested that it contains the germs of Emma.

The main story of The Watsons takes us to a sudden eclipse of Emma Watson's fortune. Emma, a girl of nineteen, is brought up elegantly by her rich and affectionate uncle and aunt. The uncle unfortunately dies, and the aunt marries an Irish Captain and goes away to Ireland. Emma has just returned home to bear the burden of her genteel poverty. She is the first of the three isolated heroines, the other being Fanny Price and Anne Elliot.¹¹⁴ She has three sisters - Elizabeth, Penelope and Margaret - and a semi-invalid father (a retired clergyman and a widower). The household responsibilities rest on the shoulders of the eldest sister, Elizabeth. All of them live in a village several miles off a town in Surrey.

Nearly half of the fragment deals with the first Winter ball in town, where Emma is to make her first public appearance. Her eldest sister accompanies her, and warns her against the rich and flirting Tom Musgrove. She also reveals her past history to Emma, and emphasises that they must marry one day to escape poverty. These girls have two brothers too - Robert and Sam. While the dashing Robert marries the daughter of an attorney (his employer) and is

happily settled, the younger one (Sam) is a surgeon and wants the hands of a rich girl called Miss Edward.

The young and rich Lord Osborne attends the ball alongwith his retime - his mother and sister, Rev. Mr. Howard and his widowed sister, Mrs. Blake, with her small son. Emma draws the attention of all present there when she chooses to dance with the Blake boy, who becomes happy. Mr. Howard asks for two dances with her, enabling her thereby to refuse Tom Musgrove. Lord Osborne is also interested in her, but she likes Mr. Howard. Emma stays with the Edwards for the night and in the morning Tom comes there with a message from Elizabeth to get back home.

After two days, Lord Osborne and Tom Musgrove visit the Watsons at the time of dinner. Emma is conscious of her humble style of living. The Lord invites her to the next week's hunt, though she does not know riding. She tells him candidly that she has neither, "the inclination" nor 'the means' for it. She pertly tells him: 'Female economy will do a great deal my Lord, but it can not turn a small income into a large one.' Thereafter, Lord Osborne speaks to her or to Elizabeth with great propriety.

In a week's time, their brother Robert and his wily wife come from Croydon alongwith Margaret who looks to be artificial and selfish. Robert and his wife blame Emma's aunt and uncle for reducing her to a state of poverty, but the girl defends them. Tom Musgrove comes to them at tea-time and plays cards with them. Margaret inspires Elizabeth to invite him to dinner, but he fails to turn up. Margaret loses her temper. Emma sits quietly with her, a man of sense and education, and thinks about her past present and future. The story of the fragment comes to an abrupt end with Emma's rejection of an invitation from Robert and his wife to visit their home.

The memoir edited appended a note about Cassandra's

knowledge of the novelist's intentions. Mr. Watson was to die soon, and Emma was to defend for a home on her brother and his wife. She was to refuse a proposal from Lord Osborne. Miss Osborne was to show her love for Mr. Howard, who on the contrary loves Emma. Mr. Howard was finally to marry Emma.

The Watsons is evidently a social comedy, having fixed its eye on the Watsons and their neighbours (Lord Osborne, Mr. Howard, and Tom Musgrove, and the Edwardes), on the social get-togethers and visits, and on their balls and hunttings. The poverty of Mr. Watson is somewhat distressing - more distressing than that of Fanny Price in Portsmouth, and the vulgarity of Robert and his wife is surely baffling. Lord Osborne is a reserved and amicable man, but Tom Musgrove is clever and conceited. Mr. Edward is "genially expansive,"¹¹⁵ While Mr. Howard is lovable clergyman. Running into some fifty pages, the fragment is "more 'modern' than anything she had yet written or indeed was to write (unless Sanditon be expected)."¹¹⁶ Had Jane Austen lived longer, she should have brought out, in unmistakable terms, the characters of Emma and Mr. Howard as the two genuinely loving souls meant for each other.

The second fragment, Sanditon, was written between 27th January and 18th March, 1817. It consists of barely twelve chapters, and is set in the seaside village of Sanditon in Sussex. No doubt, this work was written at a time when Jane's health was failing (and we know that she died four months after - on July 1817). The authoress wrote it hurriedly to combat her illness and dejection, and cast it in the tone and style of a burlesque. Dr. Chapman discovered it in manuscript form, and printed it in 1925 for the first time.

Sanditon is a small, fashionable sea shore, picnic resort, which is being promoted by Mr. Parker, a man of about

thirty-five. In the first five chapters, Mr. Parker is shown as an enthusiast dispensing information about the village and the people around. As the novel opens, Mr. Parker and his wife are seen going out in a carriage in search of a surgeon for Sanditon, but they meet an accident and his foot is sprained. They are long treated by a nearby farmer, and while returning they bring the farmer's daughter, Charlotte Heywood, who is twenty-two. On the way, Mr. Parker talks about Lady Donham, an energetic and cautious person of seventy. Two members of her family - Sir Edward Donham and his unmarried sister - greedy of her money have recently lost all hopes. Lady Donham rather favours Clara Brereton, who is young and beautiful and who has "an excellence of mind and character."¹¹⁷

In Chapter IV, the Parkers and Charlotte saunter into Sandition. Dr. Parker talks highly of the improvements of the village. He has given up his old parental home for a new one commanding a beautiful view of the sea. He informs about the presence of three other persons in the family - his sisters Diana and Susan and his younger brother Arthur. The fifth chapter acquaints us with these three members. Arthur is aged over twenty and is too delicate to enter any profession. Diana and Susan are very strong-headed.

Henceforth Charlotte starts meeting various people. She and Mr. Parker visit Lady Donham and Clara Brereton, and invite them home for tea. Miss Clara is poor and lovely, and pulls on well with her benefactor. Meanwhile, Sir Edward and his sister call on the Parkers. Charlotte likes this man and his manners, but she also notices that he is specially inclined towards Miss Clara. While moving on the terrace, Sir Edward leaves Miss Clara for Charlotte, and grows lyrical over the beauty of the sea and immediately afterwards over the theme of love and the poetry of love. Charlotte infers that he is totally foolish and morally devoid. She also does not like Lady Dohnam's talk of worldly matters.

Sir Edward is a reader of novel, and his fancy has been caught by the sentimental novels of Richardson. He thinks that a lover's villainy is an act of genius. But in talking about 'such a stuff as dreams are made of', it seems he is inclined to seduce Clara, who is wise enought to read his mind. Clara has no intention of being seduced by a romantic man. Jane Austen has introduced a new vein and style in her fragment by dwelling on "the serio-comic idea of seduction."¹¹⁸

The last four chapters fix the focus on Diana, Susan, and Arthur, who all gather up at Sanditon. Diana is there to carry on her benevolent activity by procuring lodges and servants for the two groups of people visiting the sea-resort. Charlotte is surprised to hear the story of Diana. She feels that the latter's benevolence went with a certain amount of vanity. Charlotte is curious to learn something about the fragile Arthur. Diana gets somewhat confused when she is informed that her two groups of people are actually only one.

In the meantime, Mrs. Parker and Charlotte calls on Lady Donham and also meet Sidney Parker, a well-bred youngman. Sidney has just arrived at Sanditon, offering great joy to Mr. Parker. While entering the premises of Sanditon House, Charlotte looks ahead and sees through the mist that Clara and Sir Edward are sitting together very composedly across the fence.

The story breaks of at this point, after showing the visitors in a sitting room where Mrws. Parker is pointing out a large portrait of Sir Henry Donhman over the mantle. The satiric intent of the novelist is quite obvious here. Commentation on this fragment, Douglas Bush writes: "In matter and manner Sandition is radically different from its predecessors. Its plot or theme is an enigma, since the fragment contains so many possibilities of restricted or complex development."¹¹⁹ Another noted critic, Tony Tanner,

speaks of this fragment thus: ".....Sandition is of course unfinished..... it seems to me that the abrupt termination..... could hardly be more appropriate."¹²⁰ The fragment that comes to us is "a first draft, much corrected by Jane Austen....."¹²¹ Dr. Chapman suggests that the story seems to have two heroines - Charlotte Heywood and Clara Brereton. Robert Liddell believes that this work may be regarded as "much inferior, not only to the six novels, but also to Lady Susan and The Watsons," but in no way it shows the novelist's "failing powers."²² As the fragment stands, we should guess that Jane Austen expected to return to a again after recovering from her bone-chilling illness.

III. SUMMING UP

Having examined Miss Austen's novels, both complete and fragmentary, the reader is convinced that she look at the humand world from the eyes of her heroines or dominant female characters. It has to be conceded that Jane Austen herself becomes a commentator on persons, places, and things at times, but she too is one of the fairer sex. Generally her heroines - Catherine, Morland, Elinor Dashwood, Elizabeth Bennet, Fanny Price, Emma Woodshous, and Anne Elliot (nothing to speak of Lady Susan in Susan, of Emma and Elizabeth in The Watsons, and of Charlotte Heywood and Clara Brereton in Sanditon, because they figure in fragmentary works) - are more candid and honest, more steadfast and sincere in their approach to love and marriage than their male counterparts. It is true that her male characters are not mere types, representing one or the other principle but her heroines are more full-blooded, more enduring, and more practical (in tackling the social and domestic problems). Naturally, they have to face their own pressing manifold problems, but they face them boldly and eventually come out of them with flying colours.

Such potent women do not remain static or flat; they rather grow strong and dynamic with every step of the

story. Their development takes place in a certain specific direction - from the burlesque of manners through the liberation of personality to the affirmation of individuality. And in the course of this development, Jane's heroines demonstrate exemplary courage and determination. They largely remain free from the two devouring demons of "worldliness" and 'romanticism',¹²⁰ keeping domestic happiness above self and bargaining.

CHAPTER III

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C H A P T E R - IV

CHAPTER-IV

JANE AUSTEN AND HER PHILOSOPHY : A CONSOLIDATED VIEW

Jane Austen, who led an approximately isolated life as the modest, gentle-natured daughter of the rector of Steventon, in Hampshire (England) was "a rare and wonderful literary phenomenon" and came in due course to be acknowledged as "one of the six greatest novelists in the English language".¹ In her short and uneventful life (1775-1817), interrupted by her occasional visits to London, she lived in a peaceful rural atmosphere, performing her round of "domestic chores and polite social obligations."² It is pretty difficult to attain such "peace of mind" as Jane commanded, especially in the present day hectic world. She could attain such a peaceful mental attitude because she had secluded herself from the external world of intrigues and evil designs. This was evidently the result of a self-imposed restriction upon herself,- a kind of restriction that might have bored other or might have aroused them with a seething rebellion against the obtaining social system. The seclusion of Jane turned out to be "a positive and indispensable assets,"³ for it was in this compelling environment that she dedicated herself to the writing of her six novels of manners and a few unfinished scripts like The Watsons. She could evolve her own style of writing and her own philosophy of life because she was born and bred in a tranquil environment, which kept at bay all the worries about the French Revolution of 1789 and about the crashing struggle of the Napoleonic Wars. It was Jane's balanced temperament and controlled approach to life that enabled her to brave the storm brewing around and to keep herself immune from the barking cares of the people and from the ranging problems of the day. This is the consolidated view of Jane's vision or 'philosophy' of life.

I. Primary Consideration of Happiness: Social & Individual

Jane Austen, "the greatest of the English novelists"⁴ and the first great woman writer in English,⁵ once remarked in 1815 : "I think I may boast myself to be will all possible vanity, the most unlearned and uninformed female who ever dared to be an authoress."⁶ This remark offers a glimpse into the real nature of Jane - that she was the least assuming and pompous, that she never staked a high claim for herself as an authoress, and that she had a simple, childlike quality about her. This unassuming nature of hers must have contributed a lot to her inner happiness, to her contented life with a limited range of knowledge, and to her "modest simplicity of character."⁷ On the testimony of Jane's Austen's nephew, J.C. Austen Leigh, it may be observed that the novelist herself imbibed the virtues of moral rectitude, correct taste and warm affections - the virtues with which she invests her ideal characters like Elizabeth Bennet, particularly the heroines - and that :

"Hers was a mind well balanced on a basis of good sense sweetened by an affectionate heart, and regulated by fixed principles; so that she was to be distinguished from many other amiable and sensible women only by that particular genius which shines out clearly enough in her works... ."⁸

This statement brings out the fact that Jane had evolved her own pattern of life, her own philosophy (so to say) of existence, which allowed hardly any room for mental disturbance. Though Fay Weldon, writing in March 1987, might say that Jane was "a much sharper, shrewder, unhappier woman"⁹ than what her nephew has painted her to be, the truth remains that Jane followed the principle of 'gentleness' in her code of conduct and did not meddle with matters which she did not fully understand: In this connection, it may be pointed out that she had to attend very few social engagements

and that in her writing she never touched upon politics, or medicine. It is to the credit of Jane that she imposed certain restrictions upon herself and these restrictions determined to a great extent not only the range and scope of her fictional art but also her happiness while she was alive.

Now, what is happiness? Though the question is difficult to answer, it is something 'inner' and is related to the curtailment of one's desire. May philosophers, like the Upanishadic seers and Lord Buddha, have clearly indicated that the extinction of 'desire' lends one to the attainment of happiness (or bliss) as well as of salvation. While discussing 'happiness', we are suddenly reminded of the dialogue between Yaksha and Yudhishthira in the Mahabharata. In reply to the pointed question of Yaksha, Yudhishthira stated thus: 'Happiness is the result of the good conduct.'

In a delightful re-creation of Jane Austen's works, Mary Corringham rightly versifies thus :

"As for my present readers, most agree that in my pages they forget all care, sorrow, injustice, fear, perplexity, and even war's gargantuan despair. With those who need me most, I'll always share My cheerful world. They shall nor done in vain. I'll take them to my heart, and ease their pain."¹⁰

This poetic passage in rime royal has been put in the mouth of June herself. One has to mark "my cheerful world" in it, for it is very important in the personal life of the novelist. The passage remarkably demonstrates the way Jane carved out her own individual happiness.

As for 'social' happiness to Jane Austen is concerned, she was fortunate to have contact, alongwith the other Austen girls, with some "convivial families nearby,"¹¹ and some of these families are still found there, such as the Jervois of Herriard, the Terrays, and the elegant Boltons and the socially dignified portsmouths. At the time of Jane Austen,

the Stevenson Manor was occupied by a friendly family, the Digwoods, and the Deane House was with the ball-giving Harwoods. Jane Austen and her sister Cassandra had close friendly relations with the Bigg-Wither daughters then living at the Marydown House. At this house, the Austen girls used to spend the night and witness the balls or participate in them.

One of the closest friends of Jane was Mrs. Lloyd, who lived a widowed life with her three daughters (one of whom - the second one named Eliza - was married to Vicar of Kentbury in Wiltshire) in one of the two houses bought by uncle Francis Austen. Mrs. Lloyd's mother was a cruel woman, and her remaining two daughters - Martha and Mary - were quite friendly with Jane.

Another woman who was deeply attached to Jane was Mrs. Anne Lefroys, the wife of Rev. George Lefroy. She was "a charming woman and, in particular, a close and loving friend to Jane Austen."¹²

Jane's mother was a duty-bound domestic woman, and Jane had a kind of understanding with her, with no complaints from either side. As we know, Jane and her sister Cassandra were "very much grown... and greatly improved in manners as in person,"¹³ and Mrs. Lefroy reports that they were "perfect Beauties, and of course gain hearts of dozens" and that they were "two of the prettiest girls in England."¹⁴ And Henry Austen in his biographical notice to the posthumous edition of Northanger Abbey and Persuasion, writes about Jane's charming body and cheerful nature as under :

"Of personal attractions she possessed a considerable share. Her nature was that of true elegance. It could not have been increased without exceeding the middle height. Her carriage and deportment were quiet, yet graceful. Her features were separately good. Their assemblage produced an unrivalled expression of that cheerfulness, sensibility, and benevolence, which were

her real characteristics. Her complexion was of the finest texture. It might with truth be said, that her eloquent blood spoke through her modest cheek."¹⁵

This pen-portrait of Jane Austen coupled with that of her nephew Austen-Leigh's can forcefully regret the charge of the mother of her contemporary Miss Mary Russell Mitford that Jane had been "the prettiest, silliest, most affected, husband hunting butterfly"¹⁶ of her times. Moreover, there is nothing wrong in doing the same as other women of the day were doing. 'Husband-hunting' or 'falling in love' are actually the natural response to one's emotions. Any curbing of these emotions leads to psychological complications and abnormalities.

Fortunately, Jane was free from these complications and tensions because of her own personal conduct and because of the social milieu around.

Going through her novels, we come to know that love and marriage form the dominant themes of Jane Austen. To feed these vital themes, she had to rely on the first-hand experiences rather than on the reports-right or wrong-of others. Her brothers, Edward and James, were already married and settled. Her elder sister, Cassandra, had a tragic love affair with Thomas Fowle in 1795, since Thomas sailed to the West India in 1796 in search of a prospect and in February 1797 died of yellow fever at Santo Domingo. Jane Austen also had her first love-affair with a handsome young Irishman called Tom Lefroy, but the young boy being ambitious and moneyless - Jane had no money with her¹⁷ - chose a wealthy partner and eventually became Lord Chief Justice of Ireland. Apparently, this love was no more than "a girlish love,"¹⁸ though it affected her deeply. Miss Jane Austen's next suitor was Mr. Samuel Blackall, a Fellow of Emmanuel Colleges, Cambridge, who met her when he was staying with the Lefroy of Ashe in 1798. This affair proved to be still shortlived, and Mr. Blackall was of a cold and reasoning sort of a person than one of heart.

The love-affairs mentioned above had offered Miss Jane an intimate knowledge of the ways of the world and of the peculiar, even selfish, behaviour of the malefolks. The knowledge protected her from any further frustration and betrayal in love, just as it protected her shy and modest heroines from the evil designs of their bad suitors. This also stood her in good stead, for many marriages have eventually floundered on the rocks of death and destruction.

II. Re-organization of the 'self'

Jane took some time in emerging from the traumatic experiences of life and in re-organizing herself on a sound and safe line. Any re-organization of the 'Self' is possible by exercising a good deal of discipline and restraint upon one's wistful thinking and erring sentiments. And we know that Jane was a woman of reticence, restraint and reserve. Her 'genteel' manners and high-brow behaviour towards others in a social gathering subsided many a storm and cooled down the frayed temper. It should not be construed in any way that she looked down upon others, but that she was sharp and shrewd enough to stay off the glares of evil people and to put aside the glamours of rich persons.

Mary Corringham has aptly remarked of her thus :

The 'treasured friend', the 'sister unsurpassed', the 'other self' - all come to this at last.¹⁹

The 'other self' - or, the re-organized 'self' - was no doubt the outcome of Jane's admirable 'negative capability'. This kind of 'capability' kills the germ of subjectivity and breeds an enviable objectivity in winters. Several renowned British authors are well known for its masterly use, and Shakespeare and Keats and Jane Austen are glaring examples of it. In the twentieth century, T.S. Eliot also immensely supported it through his critical essays on Tradition and the Individual talent' and on 'objective correlative'. Jane might

have lived though a troubled time when the literary trends were in a state of transition and when the Pre-Romantics like Gray, Collins, Cowper and Thomson were blazing a different trail through their poetic practices. But it is remarkable that she kept herself away from the raging passions and the blowing winds of the day. Once again, it is pertinent to quote Mary Corringham about the artistic practice of Miss Austen :

" I alone was free
from women writers' lettered vanity.
In its reserve my art was delicate :
I did not force, insist, exaggerate."

What is being suggested here is that Jane Austen could create 'the other self' through her works of art, which maintain a neat and clean balance in plot - structure and a certain distance and objectivity in her character portrayals.

III. Adjustment of individual and Social Values

Miss Austen who went on shopping, dancing, or visiting her friends and relatives was all for adjustment of individual and social values of life. For this kind of adjustment, she had evidently made certain sacrifices and deliberately avoided the extremes of human existence. Her depiction of men and women and their manners is based on a close observation of life around her. As countless individuals live in a society, it is the individuals who have to follow the laws of that particular society, and not vice versa. This assertion aptly applies to Jane too. What the English society of the late eighteenth and earlier nineteenth centuries was like ? - We shall come to this question after discussing the sacrifices made by Jane and her self-imposed restrictions. At this point it would be proper to quote J.I.M. Stewart at some length :

"The discernible universe (of Miss Austen) is totally lacking in urgent political, social or economic problems of any sort, and the most tremendous event in

the history of modern Europe is represented by a couple o needle-books, 'made by some emigrant; with which Mrs. Dashwood favours the Miss Steeles. Indeed, no sort of general ideas exist.....

Far from the abodes of noise, disorder, and impropriety, we enjoy the society of sensible, gentleman like men and rational, unaffected women, whose tempers are mild but whose principles are steady,.....

And this statement followed by another one almost of the same nature. Writing about Miss Austen, Stewart remarks that she was "the mistress of a quaintly confined world, inviolate to ideas and admitting only the most distant reverberations of the passions", and she could bring to it "a transforming vis comica which can create Mr. Woodhouse and Mr. Collins and Mrs. Norris and Lady Catherine de Bourgh." If comedy of irony was Jane's mode of perception in art, her personal life was one of 'intense moral preoccupation'. Dr. Frank Reymond Leavis has rightly remarked in this respect : "The principle of organization ... in her work is an intense moral interest of her own in life that is in the first place a preoccupation with certain problems that life compels on her as personal ones Without her intense moral peroccupation she couldn't have been a great novelist." The question of 'morality' at once prompts us to take to a study of the social conditions - moral, political and economic - of Jane's times.

The moral climate in which Jane grew up was not conducive to her development as an artist or as a Christian. Mr. Stewart thinks that "It is a narrow and prudential morality, much tainted by material interest." In Sense and Sensibility (1811), the novelist remarks of Willough by that 'in slighting, too, easily the forms of worldly propriety, he displayed a want of coution which Elinor could not aprove'.

Similarly, in Emma (1815), Frank Churchill judges the Crown Inn a capital place for a dance, and makes light of Emma's objection that socially homogeneous gathering could not be

contrived. Emma reflects that 'his indifference to a confusion of rank bordered, too, much on inelegance of mind', and assigns the explicit reason of it to his lack of 'pride'. Emma, of course, becomes the spokeswoman for the novelist, who tends to be much more didactic and moralistic in her later novels than in the earlier ones (where the comic mode dominates, the mode to which Jane returns in her last fragmentary work, *Sandition*, 1817).

Related to the question of 'morality' is the fermenting subject of 'sexual morality'. In Pride and Prejudice (1813), Elizabeth Bennet can easily peer through her sister Lydia's 'wild volatility' and 'disdai of all restraint', and she becomes apprehensive of her future life, for Lydia poses a danger not only to herself but to 'our importance, our respectability'. And Eliza is definitely a representative creation of Jane's personal life made her a 'moralist', and in her novels she began articulating the moral propositions which the society of her day had imposed upon its members. It has been pointed out that Miss Austen impersonalized 'her moral tensions' in her fiction cast on 'two inches of ivory'. Prof. Trilling sees Mansfield Park (1818) as a novel beginning with 'a crisis in the author's spiritual life' and ending in 'an orthodox Freudian view of art'. Even Prof. Stewart supports this view. Jane was undoubtedly caught up in the common rectitudinous attitudes of her society', and all the note of caution and constraint sounded by her in her novels, especially in Emma and Mansfield Park, was actually a gift of the prudish age she lived in. And the society of Jane's age was "not a good society, but a bad one, a predominantly vulgar society, says Prof. Trilling. In regard to sex, this society was a bit rigidly prohibitive and inhibitive, and Miss Austen never dared to violate its norms and laws. But this should not be interpreted as her approval of these prohibitions and inhibitions; she was rather, according to Mary Evans, "in many ways deeply critical of them". Miss Austen was a writer not of 'conservatism' but of 'liberal tradition'. She did not subscribe to the capitalist-class values in the matter of religion or morality but only to

the middle-class values of her society. She decidedly believed in "the equality of men and women" and in "the right of women to moral independence and autonomy."²⁸

Morality is, and in Jane's time it was, a vital issue in any social system. Members of a particular society are desired to behave in any orderly way, so that the lives and the sense of morality of other citizens are not endangered in any palpable way. Any clash of interests between individuals is to be settled by that society in order to maintain coherence and continuity. The novels of Jane Austen are largely based on her observations of men, women, their manners and social conduct. Their increasing sense of sophistication and sense of morality. Lest she should appear whimsical or abnormal in her personal life, she tailored it in accordance with the rules and demands of her society. It was a time when the well-to-do or capitalist society was undergoing a transformation into an industrial society. Also a largely rural world of agricultural production was now slowly yet steadily yielding place to an unborn world of mechanized industrial production. But Jane's social world, as created in her novels, was not visibly threatened by the oncoming industrialization and its rural tranquillity and stability remained unruffled in a large measure. Writing about this aspect of Jane's personal and social life, Mary Evans has markedly pointed out that --

"First, rural calm and stability are ideological constructs of romantic historians: the history of the European countryside is crowded with conflicts between land-owners and peasants, between different class groups, and between diverse cultures. Second, it was not Industrialization which immediately threatened Austen's social world but the increasing commercialization of agriculture and the resources of the land in the eighteenth century."²⁹

Jane Austen belonged to the lesser gentry, a social group whose prosperity was getting threatened, even if in slow degrees, by the rise of capitalism in the countryside. Thus, Jane was feeling a sense of insecurity in the midst of growing plenty, and in this matter she resembled Miss Bates in Emma. Like Miss Bates who was 'poor' and 'comfortless', Miss Austen also felt the constraints of material hardship and financial stringency in her life. Her lack of money prevented one of the probable marriages for her. The builders of her fictional world have painstakingly pointed out that many of her characters like Mr. Darcy, Mr. Knightley, Emma Woodhouse, the Dashwoods, the Bennets, Fanny Price and the entire Price family, the family of Sir Walter Elliot, and Miss Bates and her mother, are all living uncomfortably and far-removed from the conditions of ease and prosperity. Even Mrs. Bennet in Pride and Prejudice seems to be greatly concerned with the problem and marrying off her five daughters to some wealthy and resourceful young men, and her overpowering concern for the future of her daughters seems to have stemmed from a sense of social and financial insecurity. In Jane's age, it was believed that women must marry and adopt a moral conduct in life, and Mary Evans rightly observes in this connection: "If women do not marry and do not live by the moral code of bourgeois society then their fate is unlikely to be prosperous or happy."³⁰ Obviously, financial problems presently pose a threat to women's integrity and independence, as they did in Jane's time, and women have to rely on the menfolks and their resources in order to come out of their day-to-day worries and struggles. Jane was very well aware of this dilemma of the fair sex, and her own contentment lay in 'confirmed sisterhood' and 'inviolate spinsterhood'. Though love and marriage constitute the dominant themes of her novels, she hardly ever enjoyed the pleasure of love and never entered into a wedlock. Isn't it a great travesty of her life? Isn't it how she manages the purity of her art and the power of her expression, putting aside the considerations of materialism and capitalism. She squarely faces the social and material

compulsions of her time, and suggests obliquely, almost like Keats and Arnold in the domain of poetry, that Art has its victories no less renowned than War and that Art can provide a lasting ease and comfort to the otherwise tension-ridden humanity. It is a great message indeed, - a message that will never wear out or stale away.

IV. Social Cohesion

Jane Austen fully subscribed to the principle of social cohesion in order to establish reason and balance in human life. All her novels, beginning with Northanger Abbey and Sense and Sensibility and ending in Persuasion, tend to justify the idea of stability in an individual's life as well as in the larger society. Her attitude towards social order and individual balance is also borne out by the fact that she turned a blind eye to the momentous French Revolution of 1789 (which shook the very foundation of monarchial system of government, and which ushered in the era of people's rule in France and elsewhere in Europe). Similarly, the Industrial Revolution of 1832 (which signalled a drastic change from the agrarian to the industrial life) did not seem to affect her, though it had begun to raise its ugly head since the late eighteenth century (when Jane was young and active). Her silence over these two very significant historical events indicates that she did not believe nor believe in violent revolutions or sudden social, political and economic transformations. Some people may interpret it as her 'conservatism', but it was actually an integral part of her consolidated view of life, of her philosophy of individual and social life. In case there was a tussle between the interests of an individual and those of society, she seemed to suggest, through the salutary examples of her heroines, that the individual must be prepared for certain sacrifices and adjustments. Her own example shows others what to do in such a situation. One must suppress one's turbulent passions and romantic impulses in order to create a healthy atmosphere in society. This idea is quite in keeping with the social and

political thoughts of Wordsworth, Arnold, and T.S.Eliot. True to this idea, Jane negated all her for which Romanticism in literature stood. So, like other Classicists, she favoured the principle of order and balance and reason both in life and literature.

In Miss Austen's era, women were treated as a liability on patriarchs, and they had to depend largely upon their spouses for their moral and material support. Evidently, they bring out the disparity in social status of the two divergent sexes. The writer in Jane Austen rose in rebellion against the prevailing social customs, and she forcefully pleaded for the equal status and rights for women and in this respect she is considered as a typical 'feminist'. She never lets down her heroines, who happen to be moulded after her own style of functioning and thinking in life. But she does not want a conflict between men and women in society; instead, she wants a kind of harmonious existence between them, for they represent the two polarities of humanity, having some inseparable connections between them. The novelist does not wish to precipitate a crisis in social order, and hence she depicts mostly types representing certain virtues and vices. The very titles of her novels confirm this truth. She deals with the proud and the prejudiced, the sensible and the oversensible. That's why Mary Evans in her book, Jane Austen and the State (1987), suggests that "Gender.... becomes secondary to the nature of a human being's personal qualities....."³¹. And these qualities cross the narrow divisions of humanity, the divisions of sexes developing a crack in the well-laid divine scheme (which created man and woman for each other). Though it was not the ripe moment to categorically assert that 'Man for the field, and woman for the hearth' (as later Tennyson did), Jane was sensible enough not to produce undue ripples on the surface of the social order. She, therefore, ended her novels on a note of promise and fulfilment.

It would be appropriate here to study certain facts, traditions, and attitudes which form the basic fabric of Jane

Austen's novels and which are the integral part of the social fabric of her age. As we know, Jane along with her parental family lived in the country, and a large proportion of English population resided in villages and country towns in her time. This population was more conservative than that living in London and other big cities.

Jane Austen paints a clear picture of her social set-up as a hardcore realist. Writers like D.H. Lawrence and Sir Harold Nicolson might have failed to understand her dramatic and ironic manner of presentation of men and women of her society, but throughout she remains a satirist-cum-realist who is out to mock at the snobbery and artificiality of her age. Many of her characters like Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Mr Collins, Sir Walter, Elizabeth Elliot, Emma Woodhouse, and Lady Russell are seen suffering from the malady of snobbery or artificiality. Mr. Darcy in Price and Prejudice cherishes a wrong kind of pride, and he is taught the lessons of goodwill and civility by the heroine, Elizabeth Bennet. Jane can, thus, easily distinguish "between true and spurious gentility, between internal worth and external rank or possessions."³² Conventional gentility is founded on land and money, and the rich like General Tilney, Mrs. Ferrars, and Mrs. Churchill do not necessarily possess real worth or good breeding. Jane Austen directs her satire against the pompous rich and the supercilious men and women. Douglas Bush rightly points out that "her comedies of manners have far more edged satire than unalloyed humour."³³ Her satire or irony becomes a powerful tool to set the wrong right and to restore normalcy and balance in human behaviour.

In Jane's time, class divisions were there in England, and most genteel and civilized families had their fixed roots and lived in the houses where their forefathers had lived. Sometimes the names of their houses of farms acquired so much currency that they came to be identified with an unchanging level of civility and culture, be that high or low. Miss Austen, who was deeply rooted to rural

Hampshire, made her strong sense of place a functional element in her fiction. Thus, 'Mansfield Park' and 'Northanger Abbey' are the two significant names of places.

Marriage is unmistakably a social institution of paramount importance, and in Jane's day it was used to "augment family wealth, power and prestige."³⁴ Her novels are primarily concerned with the marriage of young men and women. A marriage transaction was not an easy task, and it entailed a heavy financial burden on parents. Marriages were not free from commercial considerations, apart from the considerations of class and rank. In the upper class, parents were still "active operators in the marriage market."³⁵ but daughters had gained some freedom. This was not the situation in the lower class. Jane's novels do depict a few happy marriages of love and understanding. Some young women like Penelope Watson, Isabella Thorpe, the Steele sisters, and Mrs. Clay carry on their plunderous campaigns against the resourceful males, but the heroines moved by better and higher motives either go in search of loving suitors or bring them to scratch.

In Jane's world, young men who sought after socially respectable openings got accommodated in the army and the navy, or in the church and the law. But many of them avoided a settled profession. Speaking of the, Douglas Bush comments thus: "Most 'gentlemen' living on their incomes or hopes, spend their abundant leisure in the diversions prescribed by their tastes and means or debts."³⁶ Obviously, young men of expensive habits, like Wickham and William Elliot, must marry for money, but young men of good luck and property, like Darcy and Bingley, must not marry beneath them in social position and monetary condition. Jane Austen must have not liked this situation of commercialised marriage, but she largely remained faithful to the world of her observation. In her last novel, Persuasion (1818), Jane seems to plead for "love and risk against worldly prudence."³⁷ If for young men, the prospects as mentioned above were non-too-happy, for the numerous young women of gentility there were only prospects -

marriage, long spinsterhood at home, and becoming a governess or teacher in a school.³⁸ Of course, of the three prospects, marriage was the most convenient prospect to kill the horrors of isolation and to perpetrate the human race. This again needed a kind of understanding between men and women, or a sort of 'social cohesion' in England.

Another social institution of great importance is Religion. In Jane's time, the condition of the Church of England was not so happy; instead, "spiritual zeal", it practised "lethargy and worldliness."³⁹ But Jane was not that gloomy or dispirited about the moral and spiritual situation obtaining around her. From the example of her own father she learnt that the clergy were not so ideal as they should have been, and that not all clergymen were so bad. Personally, Jane had a firm faith in the power of religion over people and society, and she had "her full share of Anglican reserve."⁴⁰ In her fiction, she generally treated young clergymen in their social and secular roles as lovers. But they can hardly be imagined to be in bed, for the novelist never allowed moral laxity in this matter. It is true, the upper and lower classes were guilty of this kind of moral laxity, but the middle-class usually observed reticence and strictness in this matter

Jane Austen given us a few characters of loose sexual morality in her novels and letters; for example, she mentions the acquisition of a mistress by the noble patron of Rev. Thomas Fowle, her sister's fiance; Willoughby seduces Colonel Brandon's young ward; Wickham who wanted to be a clergyman tries to carry off Mr. Darcy's sister twice and when he does not succeed in it he elopes with Lydia Bennet; Harriet Smith is the natural daughter of a prosperous tradesman; Mary Crawford comes to Mansfield to live with her sister because her uncle, a widowed admiral, has set his mistress in his house; and Henry Crawford elopes with Mrs. Rushworth.

It is in her intimate letters written to her elder sister, Cassandra, that Jane reveals the inmost of her heart.

But she is far from approving the laxity in moral conduct or looseness in 'sexual morality; as she is "sincerely and steadfastly orthodox."⁴¹ Her fictional characters indulging in loose morality or fornification are clearly condemned by others; for instance, the members of the Bennet family (with the possible exception of Mrs. Bennet) are quite shocked over Lydia's elopement with Mr. Wickham, and Elinor Dashwood regards Willoughby's action as a gross violation of the moral code of conduct and social laws. As a writer of social comedies, Jane was supposed to be a realist and an honest chronicler of all that she saw in the contemporary English society. As such, the examples of seduction, corruption or elopement should be viewed as the stray yet shocking incidents of life. While Jane, the confirmed spinster, could not turn a deaf ear to such incidents (as she had to be faithful to what she observed around), she took them as "the common human faults of selfishness, insensitivity, insincerity, and the like."⁴² Miss Austen does not 'philosophize' about sex, and her decorous heroines and young heroes are, more or less, living representatives of humanity. It is a different matter that some reputed novelists like D.H. Lawrence and Mark Twain might have not liked them for their lack of naturalness and bubbling vitality. The truth is that the novelist Jane was a writer of a different generation and of a different direction; she was a great 'classical artist' like Pope and Dr. Johnson, and she strove hard to achieve "an ordered pattern and a smooth surface."⁴³

Like Wordsworth, Miss Austen did not believe in 'rebellious passion' (in 'Laodamia'), nor did she uphold any extreme views in regard to social order and individual sense of morality. She never favoured social anarchy or political upheaval, and in his sense she was like Matthew Arnold and T.S. Eliot. She tackled the problems of life in a reasonable and balanced way. So, order and balance are the 'hallmarks' of her philosophy of life, and this is perfectly in tune with her own temperament and conduct. She must be complimented for evolving such a pattern (or philosophy) of life. The noted

novelist of the twentieth century, E.M. Forster, has rightly pointed out - "When the humour has been absorbed and the cynicism and moral earnestness discounted, something remains which is easily called Life....."⁴⁴.

What one good thing Forster suggests here is that Miss Austen's philosophy is the ordered way of life, aiming at a healthy growth of individuals as well as of the English society. This kind of philosophy does not hurt anyone because it treads the middle path, avoiding all extremes. Also, it is very helpful in generating the right sort of atmosphere for 'social cohesion' and individual harmony. This philosophy, if we are allowed to call it so, is an offshoot of Jane's deliberate thinking and her considered approach to life. In her thought as well as in her art, Jane imposes a certain discipline and decorum. That's why she has been profusely praised by the writers of the Classical school, - the school to which she really belongs. Lord David Cecil has given his judicious verdict on Miss Austen's consolidated view of life in the following manner:

On her own ground Jane Austen goes to the heart of the matter; her graceful unpretentious philosophy, founded as it is on an unwavering recognition of fact, directed by an unerring perception of moral quality, is as impressive as those of the most majestic novelists. Myself I find it more impressive. If I were in doubt as to the wisdom of one of my actions, I should not consult Flaubert or Dostoevsky. The opinion of Balzac or Dickens would carry little weight with me: were Stendhal to rebuke me, it would only convince me I had done right: even in the judgement of Tolstoy, I should not put complete confidence. But I should be seriously upset, I should worry for weeks and weeks. If I incurred the disapproval of Jane Austen.⁴⁵

Every talented writer is supposed to evolve a chain of thoughts to regulate his own life as well the life of his

compatriots, and luckily Jane Austen has also done the same in her writings. Lord Cecil calls her philosophy 'graceful' and 'unpretentious'; it is full of 'moral quality' and 'impressive'. What is more interesting about it is the fact that she does not allow it to become dull or unpalatable in her treatment because it is largely based on her own alert observations of men, women and their manners. Her philosophy has the potentiality to realise the concept of 'social cohesion', the idea of a harmonious existence for all. Some kind of adjustments is inevitable between individuals and society to ensure a truly healthy and happy life.

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CHAPTER IV

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C H A P T E R - V

CHAPTER-V

JANE AUSTEN AS A LITERARY REBEL

Jane Austen, who wrote most of her novels in the last decade of the eighteenth century and in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, was partly a literary rebel and partly a conformist in her creative writings. Evidently, she left behind no literary theory nor did she spell it out anywhere in detail. Her letters occasionally offer us a glimpse into what she thought and felt about her writings, but admittedly no systematic literary theory can be framed from her casual observations in them. In this connection, Miss Mary Lascelles has rightly remarked as follows : ".....beyond a few pleasantries in letters to scribbling nephew or niece, a few sides to Cassandra, Jane Austen has left little indication of the scope and aim of the novel as she saw it..."¹ So, one has to depend largely on Jane's literary practice in order to formulate a clear view about her being a 'literary rebel' or not being so.

I. Jane Austen and the English Novel

There is no denying the fact that there existed a convention of writing novels before Jane Austen appeared on the literary horizon of England, and that she accepted that convention without any perceptible protestation, as Miss Lascelles has aptly pointed out.² Walter Raleigh calls it the novel of 'domestic satire'. In this category of fiction, man signifies what woman expects of life : love, courtship and marriage are its themes. Richardson and Fanny Burney had also written on these themes, and Miss Austen carried them forward with several subtle variations. In Jane's case.. and that is where she adopts the middle course between 'convention' and 'originality'.. "the centre holds, the rim does not constrain."³ The 'domestic novel' in which Jane excels is primarily heroine-oriented. In his 'Pamela', Richardson shows

the inner workings of the heroine's mind and heart; and so is Miss Burney too in her Evelina. Later on, Thackeray wrote his famous novel, The Vanity Fair, without a hero. All the six important novels of Miss Austen are undoubtedly heroine-oriented. Her female protagonists are, in a way, the educators and liberators of menfolks. They are quite steady in their love and conviction, while her men are a bit shaky and temperamental. But the heroines make them realise at long last that love is stronger than pride of wealth or status. Catherine Morland, Elinor, Elizabeth Bennet, Fanny Price, Emma, Anne Elliot : all are 'heroic' in temper and resolute in will-power. These qualities of theirs win for them the desired goals in love and courtship.

No doubt, Jane's novels are directed to social criticism,-- a function which is carried to its finest fruition in the works of Charles Dickens. Sir Walter Scott also highlights the predicament of Scotland, and Mrs. Gaskell of the state of Manchester. Jane also does the same in her novels in a realistic vein and style--"... Jane Austen speaks the language of the country about the people of the country to the people of the country."⁴ But what sets her apart from the other novelists is her total commitment to the art of fiction. For her, novel is 'an end', and 'not the means to an end'. Most of the other novelists might have come from other spheres of activity like journalism, diary, history, correspondence, etc., but Miss Austen solely belongs to the domain of novel. She tenaciously sticks to the task of novel-writing despite certain sour experiences in her career. As we know, her publishers were initially hesitant to bring out her novels; she received rejection slips and shabby treatments at their hands. Still, she did not stop writing novels. This shows her total commitment to Art. And her commitment to Art is all the more laudable because it admits of readers to share and enjoy what is before their eyes.

As a sensitive novelist, Jane Austen never touched

upon politics, law or medicine. Science or philosophy was not her cup of tea. Her life passed off peacefully without any significant changes or great crises. Austen-Leigh in his remarkable Memoir comments that 'Of events her life was singularly barren'. She relentlessly worked on 'the little bit (two inches wide) of ivory' with so fine a brush, as one of her letters reveals. The restricted range of her work admitted of 'three of four families in a country villages'. This makes her a 'minimalist; and seems to be in line with her own declaratin in one of her letters of 1815-- that she is 'the most unlearned and uninformed female who ever dared to be an authoress'. While the declaration reflects Miss Austen's humility in clear terms, it also provides a cover to her tolerable knowledge of the social conditions about her. If Jane imposed restrictions upon herself and her art, it was in all probability inspired by her desire of not competing with Richardson, Scott and Sterne. In this context, it may be mentioned that Jane did not write Sentimental or Romantic novels like those novelists. She was also distinct from Daniel Defoe and some other earlier novelist in that she beautifully combined 'plot' and 'character' in her novles (as they did not). In this matter, too, Jane comes out as a literary rebel.

A neat and clean balance between 'plot and 'character which we witness in Miss Austen is the obvious outcome of her skilful handling of art. Her art being close to life remains realistic and unromantic throughout. She, of course, avoids scenes of guilt and murder, and does not like to shed unnecessary tears. Her first work of fiction, Northanger Abbey, begins as a burlesque of the horrible and the melodramatic, but her Emma is undeniably realistic and close to everyday life. Her writings are largely governed and guided by an easy decorum, and they hardly ever dwell on moments of fierce passion and scenes of bloodshed and violence. In the words of the literary historian, E. Albert,

"Only the highest art can make such plots attractive, and Jane Austen's does so."⁵

Like her plots, Jane evolves her characters with a good deal of care and skill. Most of her characters are drawn from common life, and are close to the soil. They are mostly portrayed with great accuracy and keen observation. She is fond of depicting clergymen, and her own father provides an instance of case-study. By and large, the clergy are a sober and dignified class. Her heroines and heroes are living characters, while others are not so impressive. But we never confuse one for the other-- there is the servile Mr Collins in Pride and Prejudice; there is the garrulous Miss Bates in Emma; and then, the selfish and odious John Thorpe in Northanger Abbey. Though her female characters are dominating they do not shun or avoid their lovers. They definitely come from the hinterland of her memory or experience, and far outshine their male counterparts in the matter of constancy and steadfastness in love. But it would be wrong to assume that her male characters are treated shabbily or biasedly. Mr. Henry, Mr. Darcy, Capt. Wentworth, Edmund Bertram, Mr. Knightley are all vivacious creatures of flesh and blood. Even then, it is true that "the reader is made to "experience the story through the heroine's point of view."⁶ (to this topic of 'point of view' in her novels we shall revert after a while).

But while Jane Austen executes her plot and character so exquisitely, it would be futile to look for evidence, in her works, of many of the main historical and political events taking place in her lifetime. She saw, and lived through, the French Revolution of 1789, the rise and fall of Napoleon Bonaparte, and the American War of Independence (and the War with England of 1812). She died midway between Waterloo (1815) and Peterloo (1819), and lived through much of the turmoil caused by the rise of the Working Class (between 1780 and 1832). According to Tony Tanner, "These tumultuous

revolutions, changes and arguments seen to have left very little mark on her fiction, and yet of course she knew what was going on."⁷ This should not prompt one to construe that Jane was an ignorant person, having denied all the sources of information or knowledge to herself. Her self-proclaimed 'ignorance', as stated earlier, is simply a smokescreen for her tolerable information about persons, places and things. For certain specific reasons, she chose love and marriage as her subjects. Though some of her marriages are arranged at the end of novels are not so satisfactory, they are true to what happens in real life. In the given situation, it becomes all the more important for her heroines to "struggle for the right kind of marriage, which is so central to society."⁸ For Miss Austen, marriage is the most desirable kind of human relationship, and she concentrates on it in her novels with all her main and might.

II. Jane Austen's Style

One of the lasting charms of Jane Austen's art is her individualistic style. As we know, her stories are mostly narrated through the medium of her characters consciousness, and she narrates in them what is absolutely necessary. In the matter of the precision and economy of her art, Jane is avowedly indebted to her 'dear Dr. Johnson' (as she confesses in one of her letters to Cassandra, dated 8th February, 1807). No doubt, "Johnsonian diction and syntax are the standards" for her prose. Jane uses abstractions freely sometimes, but her sentences are remarkably balanced. In her method of writing, she employs irony and comedy to enhance the overall effect, or to expose the shortcomings of some persons and situations. And 'irony' or 'comedy' is nothing new to English letters. Chaucer, Langland, Swift, even Fielding, have all used this literary device. But Jane goes a step ahead of them in this matter, and becomes thereby an innovator in it. Like them, she accepts irony or caricature from her literary heritage, but she surpasses them all in changing its course and giving it a new direction. Prof.

Andrews H. Wright correctly points out: "It is thus with the sense of her novelty as well as with the knowledge of her literary heritage (which of course goes beyond Johnson) that we must look at Jane Austen's style."¹⁰ And her style is inextricably woven with her comic mode of expression, which is beautifully reflected in the creation of her unmistakable characters and situations. Obviously, her comic mode gets a boost from understatement or exaggeration. Here is an example of Jane's comic (or ironic) mode from Sense and Sensibility :

"Mrs Jennings was a widow, with an ample jointure. She had only two daughters, both of whom she had lived to see respectably married, and she had now therefore nothing to do but to marry all the rest of the world."¹¹

In this passage, the phrase 'nothing to do' brings out the triviality of Mrs. Jennings' existence. Comedy (say it parody or caricature) clearly shows the lack of discretion on her part. In Pride and Prejudice, the novelist resorts to the same device in throwing light on the Bingley sisters, who consider Miss Jane Bennet to be 'sweet':

"Mrs. Hurst and her sister allowed it to be so - but still they admired her and liked her, and pronounced her to be a sweet girl, and one whom they should not object to know more of. Miss Bennet was therefore established as a sweet girl, and their brother felt authorized by such commendation to think of her as he chose."¹²

The above-quoted statement indirectly discloses the novelist's 'sharply critical attitude' towards the Bingley sisters. This critical attitude is remarkably reflected in the three words underlined - 'established', 'authorized' and 'commendation'. We can not easily infer about the true nature of Mrs. Hurst and Miss Caroline Bingley - that they are basically selfish, snobbish and dominerring. The following extract clearly brings out these traits of their nature:

"My Dear Friend -

"If you are not so compassionate as to dine today with Louisa and me, we shall be in danger of hating each other for the rest of our lives, for a whole day's tete-a-tete between two women can never end without a quarrel. Come as soon as you can on receipt of this. My brother and the gentlemen are to dine with the officers. Yours ever,

"Caroline Bingley."13

This extract is cast in the form of a letter written by Miss Caroline Bingley to Miss Jane Bennet. It certainly hovers between love and hate, between harmonious conversation and bitter quarrel, between fashion and snobbery. If the expression 'hating each other for the rest of our lives' borders on contrast and exaggeration, the last sentence 'My brother and the gentlemen' etc. unequivocably highlights the snobbvry and hypocrisy of the Bingley sisters. In reality, many more instances of contrast, exaggeration, and understatement - which are all the well-known literary devices of irony or comedy - can be cited from the works of Miss Austen, but for the present those given above will suffice.

By now, it is amply clear that Jane Austen has the power to evoke the effect intended. The magic of her words and the flawless arrangement of her sentences are enough to render her prose appealing and impressive. Sometimes she achieves the effect by use of single specific words (just as we saw in the use of 'compassionate' and 'hating' the formationof an effect contrast in the last-quoted extract), and sometimes she stacks heavy words together to carry home the intended irony. This is how Miss Elizabeth Elliot (the elder sister of Miss Anne Elliot, the heroine) is depicted in Persuasion :

"I would have rejoiced to be certainof being

properly solicited by baronet-blood within the next twelve month or two."¹⁴

The passage cited above forcefully demonstrates, through the choice of heavy words, the complete snobbery of Miss Elizabeth, who is a prototype of her overbearing and snobbish father. Prof. Wright rightly thinks that Jane Austen at times "out-Johnsons Johnson" by her "deliberately rococo use of words."¹⁵ by her balanced sentence-structure and syntax. Mary Lascelles praises Miss Austen's sentence-structure and syntax in unmistakable terms. She points out that Miss Austen "never misuses words" (unless she is quoting Mrs. Elton), that not one of her sentences is "confused", and that the "structure and movement" of sentences "are as neat and brisk as her person."¹⁶ Sometimes she is in such a hurry that she does not complete her sentence, but she manages it so artistically that the meaning does not suffer. The authoress knows well how to carry home her sense, without sacrificing her syntax.

In the employment of speech or dialogue, Jane is a past master. Through the speech of her characters, she shows their 'social variants'. Miss Steele's speech indicates her vulgarity; Mr Shepherd uses the languages of a lawyer; the Crawfords speak in a refined fashion. Jane's heroes and heroines make us of 'tolerable English'. Miss Marcy Lascelles to whom Prof. Andrew H. Wright pays his tributes, pertinently asks the question as to how the novelist came by "this mastery of dialogue."¹⁷ She then proceeds to suggest that Jane "must have had.....a fine and true ear."¹⁸ As an alert observer of people's mannerisms in speech, she should have heard them or talked to them directly. She knew that there were different classes in society, and she represented the familiar social classes in her fiction faithfully. She portrayed both pleasant and unpleasant characters in her novels, and tried to catch their peculiar traits and idiosyncrasies in her art. To cite just one example here: in Emma, Mr. Elton is very fond of repeating 'exactly so', and

the heroine Emma mimicks his habit of using it repeatedly:

"This man is almost too gallant to be in love", thought Emma. "I should say so, but that I suppose there may be a hundred different ways of being in love. He is an excellent young man, and will suit Harriet exactly; it will be an 'exactly so', as he says himself...."¹⁹

Mimicry is undoubtedly an integral part of Jane Austen's artistic game. She generally based on people's manners of speech, their habits, and their dress and demeanour. It added a peculiar penchant to her style.

The narrative technique (which Miss Lascelles calls 'style') of Jane Austen changes from character to character, and from situation to situation. This is what Miss Lascelles describes to be her "chameleon-like faculty".²⁰ According to this sound critic, "It varies in colour as the habits of expression of the several characters impress themselves on the relation of the episodes in which they are involved, and on the description of their situations."²¹ This faculty is undeniably "a symptom of the pliability of Jane Austen's narrative style"; and this pliability is due to "the essential simplicity of its staple."²² At times Miss Austen's simplicity of prose proves to be deceptive, as it conceals the inherent subtlety of her art and the depth of her feeling.

Keeping in mind the question of development in Jane Austen's prose style, H.W.Garrod asserts that her Pride and Prejudice is a masterpiece, and that she 'could write at twenty as well, or better, ... as at forty'. But Jane herself considers this work to be 'rather too light, and bright, and sparkling' but wanting in 'shade' and 'sense'. This is what we gather from one of her letters written to her elder sister Cassandra, dated 4th February 1813. Scholars like A.H.Wright think that the three later works of Miss Austen have greater variation in tone, and sharper social criticism too. These

three later works are : Mansfield Park (1814), Emma (1816), and Persuasion (1818). Dr. Chapman, who has done an exhaustive study of Jane's writings, is not favourably inclined towards her style, and remarks thus: "I doubt if J.A. was conscious of having a style of her own. Outside her dialogue it is not highly individual; it is just the ordinary correct English that, as Johnson had said, 'everyone now writes'"²³ Prof. Andrew H.Wright, however, contradicts the assessment of Miss Austen by Dr Chapman, and states emphatically as follows:

I believe he [Dr. Johnson] underrates her on this point. It seems to me fully apparent that Jane Austen is as thoroughly original (or 'new; in Eliot's sense) in her style as she is in the other aspects of her work. Indeed, as Bacon told us long ago, style cannot be regarded as a peripheral matter. Like her literary forbears she uses stylistic devices..... for many purposes, both ironic and un-ironic - from mere delightful jeux d'esprit to solemn considered judgement.²⁴

The general opinion goes with Prof. Wright, since style is Jane Austen's forte; it is her style which makes her language so effective and her syntax so correct.

III Jane Austen's Narrative Points of View

In narrating her stories, Jane Austen does not employ merely a single point of view. There are various points of view employed by her in them, and she is found "by turns omniscient and ignorant, humble and sententious, direct and oblique, the dramatist and the teller of tales."²⁵ A proper understanding of Jane's narrative viewpoint is very important in order to have a fair and unbiased idea about her narrative technique. A work of art achieves its unity on the strength of its viewpoint. According to Prof. Andrew H.Wright, there are at least six characteristic points of view in Jane Austen's novels, and they all are "well-

recognized novelistic techniques; none is necessarily ironic.. ."²⁶ The six characteristic points of view hinted here are : (1) the 'Objective' Account, (2) Indirect Comment, (3) Direct Comment, (4) the 'Universally Acknowledged Truth', (5) the Dramatic Mode, and (6) Interior Disclosures.²⁷ We shall make a brief study of these points of view here one by one.

(a) The 'Objective' Account

In her writings, Jane Austen appears as a 'historian' knowing all the facts of the past, and then she comes out as 'a neutral observer' of the present events and persons. She introduces her characters with utter candour and directness. This is how she brings Catherine Morland, the heroine of Northanger Abbey, on to the stage for the first view :

No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be an heroine. Her situation in life, the character of her father and mother, her own person and disposition, were all equally against her. Her father was a clergyman, without being neglected or poor, and a very respectable man, though his name was Richard, and he had never been handsome.²⁸

The novelist directly plunges into the life-story of her heroine in this passage. She does the job of a chronicler of Catherine's past. Her threadbare analysis of the character and appearance of the clergeman-father reminds the reader of Goldsmith's Charles Primrose in The Vicar of Wakefield. Since Northanger Abbey is a parody or burlesque of people and events, Catherine's mother is made a butt of satire (in having brought out at least ten children, the heroine being the fourth). Jane Austen remains a chronicler in introducing a character or a situation, but on other occasions she merely jots down what she sees with her own eyes. Thus, the wedding of Emma and Mr. Knightley at the close of the novel is reported faithfully :

The wedding was very much like other weddings, where the parties have no taste for finery or parade; and Mrs. Elton, from the particulars detailed by her husband, thought it all extremely shabby, and very inferior to her own... But, in spite of these deficiencies, the wishes, the hopes, the confidence, the predictions of the small band of true friends who witnessed the ceremony, were fully answered in the perfect happiness of the union.²⁹

Clearly, the novelist identifies herself with Mrs. Elton here, and comments on what she observes or hears about the 'wedding', which is not to her liking. The irony of situation heightens when we learn that Mrs. Elton's bitterness is caused by the fact that she has not been invited to Emma's marriage, whereas her 'true friends' are present there to bless her happy union with Mr. Knightley.

In Pride and Prejudice, Mr. Wickham freely tells the story of Mr. Darcy's wrong-doings to him after the latter's departure from the neighbourhood of Longbourn. Previously, he had narrated this story to Miss Elizabeth Bennet, who grew sympathetic towards him. This is how Mr. Wickham speaks of Mr. Darcy's sense of pride :

"Yes. It has often led him to be liberal and generous, to give his money freely, to display hospitality, to assist his tenants, and relieve the poor."³⁰

Though earlier Mr. Wickham had criticized Mr. Darcy for his 'abominable pride', here he speaks the truth about the generous nature of the latter. The irony arises from the contrast between what he means and what he says. For the charms of a passage like this one, the reader has to compliment the 'objectively' of Jane Austen. And 'objectively' is one of her favourite points of view.

(b) Indirect Comment

Occasionally Jane Austen resorts to indirect comment by means of a word, a phrase, or a personal note of qualification.³¹ When she makes an indirect comment, it has generally no bearing on any of her characters or on herself.

In Northanger Abbey, Mrs. Allen arrives in Bath and is anxious to have a friend to talk to. She luckily meets Mrs. Thorpe, who happens to be her intimate school-mate. Then, the novelist comments in the following manner : "Their joy on this meeting was very great, as well it might, since they had been contented to know nothing of each other for the last fifteen years."³² Obviously, the two ladies are meeting after a long gap; they have not met each other after their respective marriages. The language becomes ironical at this juncture, particularly in the phrase 'as well it might'. This phrase denotes "the superficiality of their friendship."³³ The phrase also suggests that the novelist is nowhere directly involved in her reportage.

We give below one more instance of Miss Austen's indirect commentary from her level, Persuasion :

How eloquent could Anne Elliot have been 'how eloquent, at least, were her wishes on the side of early warm attachment, and a cheerful confidence in futurity... She had been forced into providence in her youth, she learned romance as she grew older : the natural sequence of an unnatural beginning.'³⁴

In this paragraph, the last sentence is of special interest to us. The novelist herself has indirectly stepped in. The comment that she makes here points out the maturity of Anne's mind, which can now enter the domain of love.

(c) Direct Comment

This point of view is sometimes employed by Miss Austen in her novels. For this, she uses the first person pronoun --

'I'-- but she does not do so frequently. And then, her use of 'I' is sometimes misleading. An interesting example of the employment of this viewpoint is to be had in the following extract from Mansfield Park :

Let other pens dwell on guilt and misery. I quit such odious subjects as soon as I can, impatient to restore everybody, not greatly in fault themselves, to tolerable comfort, and to have done with all the rest.³⁵

Many scholars have interpreted this statement at its face value, and they are not wrong altogether. Very rarely does Jane Austen reveal her mind. Despite Dr. Champan's objection to interpreting the statement at its face value, the truth remains that sometimes Jane speaks about herself in the person of 'I'. Moreover, a reading of her novels convinces us that she rarely dwells on murderous or melodramatic scenes and incidents, and that she invariably writes comedies or parodies of people and their manners and behaviour.

Another example of the use off 'I' is to be seen in Northanger Abbey, where the novelist is out to "expose through burlesque the Gothic delusions" and to "display with irony the human conditions of naivete."³⁶ In one place, Jane informs us that Isabella Thorpe and Catherine Morland 'read novels together'. The relevant passage is the following :

Alas! If the heroine of one novel be not patronised by the heroine of another, from whom can she expect protection and regard? I cannot approve of it. Let us leave it to the Reviewers to abuse such effusions of fancy at their leisure, and over every new novel to talk in threadbare strains of the trash with which the press now groans. Let us not desert one another; we are an injured body.³⁷

This passage is undoubtedly cast in a comic vein and

style. Here Miss Austen is making fun of her heroine and Isabella Thorpe, who are so much addicted to the sensational novels of Mrs. Radcliffe, particularly The Mysteries of Udolpho. A little onward in the same passage, Jane Austen showers an extravagant praise upon novelists and their works and calls them 'genius', wit, and taste'. But this passage should not be entirely taken as a reflection of the authoress herself, for we know,ough her letters, that she was an avid reader of the essayists of her day, especially of Dr. Johnson, Steele, Addison, and Swift. So, sometimes Jane's statements in the form of 'I' are misleading.

(d) The 'Universally Acknowledged Truth'

Now and then, Jane Austen makes use off maxims and sayings which pointedly "express the commonsense point of view".³⁸ These maxims and sayings contain the wisdom of the ages in them, and Miss Austen is quite alive to them. They also enhance the appeal of her prose, carrying with them the 'universally accepted truths'.

In Pride and Prejudice, the famous opening sentence runs like this : "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife."³⁹ This sentence carries an ironic import, for immediately afterwards we come to know that the novelist's concern is not with the 'universe' so much as with 'a neighbourhood', not with the 'entire mankind' so much as with 'the surrounding families'. The ironic effect is greatly augmented by means of contrast. Evidently, the 'truth universally acknowledged' turns out to be 'this truth ... so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families'.

Northanger Abbey presents a dismal picture of the heroine, Catherine Morland, who is a small, plain girl of common features. To her applies the maxim : 'What is fated can't be blotted'. At the end of chapter I, the novelist reports about her thus : "But when a young lady is to be a

heroine, the perverseness of forty surrounding families cannot prevent her. Something must and will happen to throw a here in way."⁴⁰ It is, then, universally accepted that a heroine will be married to a hero only (and not to anyone else). So, the statement made above is one of common-sense.

(e) The Dramatic Mode

The dramatic mode of Jane Austen is generally found in the dialogues of her characters. This mode is also discovered in certain suspenseful situations. Apparently, Jane has a perfect ear to match her personages with suitable expressions and dialogues. Prof. Wright appreciates her as "a master-dramatist -- with a perfect ear, a perfect sense of timing, a shrewd instinct for climax and anti-climax."⁴¹ Very dramatically does Miss Austen manage the conversation between Mr. and Mrs. Bennet on the arrival of a new tenant at Nether-field Park. It is modulated as follows :

"My dear Mr. Bennet," said his lady to him one day,
"have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last."

Mr. Bennet replied that he had not.

"But it is", returned she, "for Mrs. Long has just been here, and she told me all about it."

Mr. Benet made no answer.

"Do not you want to know who has taken it?" Cried his wife impatiently.

"You want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it."

This was invitation enough.⁴²

How skilfully Jane has presented the two diametrically opposed characters -- Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, Mrs. Bennet is insistent and talkative; she is inching towards her favourite subject of marrying her daughters to rich men in the neighbourhood. But Mr. Bennet does not relish her approach to a vexed social issue, and remains calm and quiet for most of

the time. The dialogue between them is highly revelatory of their respective natures, and it is packed with modulations of tone and texture. One is curious about the new arrivals in the neighbourhood, while the other is not so. This contrastive study of the two important characters adds pungency and dramatic touch to the entire passage.

Another greatly appealing passage from the standpoint of our discussion is the following one from Pride and Prejudice :

"How could I ever think her like nephew ? said she (Elizabeth Bennet), as she looked in her (Catherine de Bourgh's) face.

...

"You can be at no less, Miss Bennet, to understand the reason of my journey hither. You own heart, your own conscience, must tell yo why I come." Elizabeth looked with unaffected astonishment. "Indeed, you are mistaken, madam. I have not been at all able to account for the honour of seeing you here."

"Miss Benet", replied her ladyship in an angry tone "You ought to know that I am not to be trifled with. But however insincere you may choose to be, you shall not find me so. My character has been celebrated for its sincerity and frankness, and in a cause of such moment as this I shall certainly not depart from it. A report of a most alarming nature reached me two days ago. I was told that not only your sister was on the point of being most advantageously married, but that you, that Miss Elizabeth Bennet, would, in all likelihood, be soon afterwards be united to my nephew -- my own nephew -- Mr. Darcy."⁴³

The two women in conversation here are pursuing their different goals -- one is against the marriage of Miss Elizabeth with Mr. Darcy (so is Catherine), while the other is all set not to submit to a threatening aunt (so is Miss

Elizabeth). Catherine's self-vaunted pride of 'sincerity and frankness' goes a-begging when she fails in her mission, and she has to leave "seriously displeased."⁴⁴ The confrontation between the two women is quite surcharged with dramatic tension. Miss Elizabeth Bennet is in a piquant situation, and it is her steady mind that steers her through.

(f) Interior Disclosure

There are so many passages in Jane Austen's novels which seemingly reveal the inner recesses of her characters' minds, especially of those of her heroines and heroes. Such revelations are generally termed as 'Interior Disclosures'. No one should try to find an excuse to blame Miss Austen for such disclosures, but one must not go to the extent of identifying the novelist with her fictional creations. This fallacy is disastrous in art, and no reader can tell us with an air of finality which heroine is the closest in resemblance to Jane Austen. Her six heroines are "such different people that it is hard to imagine them yoked together in one personality, however many facets that personality may have."⁴⁵ For instance, Elinor is like a school-mistress, while her sister Marianne is talented yet impulsive. Elizabeth Bennet is highly prejudiced against Mr. Darcy, and she is possibly very close to the heart of the authoress. Fanny is born poor and ignorant, though she is warm-hearted and serviceable to others. From these specific instances, nothing definite can be deduced about Miss Austen. Besides, Jane also creates certain characters who are disgusting and odious in nature. Naturally, she feels no sympathy for them. Amongst such characters, mention may be made of Willoughby, Wickham, Elton Yeats, Lydia, Maria, Julia, and Miss Bates. The purpose in creating them is to complete the picture of the human world in all its shades and colours.

Only one instance is being given below to show that Miss Austen is not necessarily involved in what her characters say or do :

"This man is almost too gallant to be in love," thought Emma. "I should say so, but that I suppose there may be a hundred different ways of being in love. He is an excellent young man, and will suit Harriet exactly; it will be an 'exactly so', as he says himself; but he does sigh and lauguish, and study for compliments rather more than I could endure as a principal...."⁴⁶

In the first place, Emma has formed contradictory attitudes towards the parson Mr. Elton, -- "too gallant to be in love" discloses the frame of mind she is in. In the second, she clearly caricatures him by reproducing his loved phrase 'exactly so'. It is, therefore, intriguing to know that she has still set her mind on him for her poor Harriet. The pertinent question is : if she does not like Mr. Elton, how does she except that her reserved companion will like him? Emma's ignorance of the true nature of a deceitful man can hardly be imputed to Jane Austen. The novelist rather maintains a distance -- call it her 'objectivity', if you so will -- from her personages, and she should not be usually identified with them.

A consideration of Miss Austen's various points of view -- six in all -- convinces the reader that no single viewpoint could "comprehend the intent of the novels fully ...".⁴⁷ The reason is that a single point of view can highlight just one aspect of her art, whereas she employs different points of view to carry home different aspects of her art and different shifts of her tone and texture.

IV. Summing Up

'Jane Austen stands, to my thinking, midway between a conventionalist and a literary rebel. Her thematic material is not very new; nor her acceptance or appreciation of a few literary luminaries of her day warrants a recognition of her as an original theorist or as a literary rebel. In this

connection, Miss Mary Lascelles has rightly remarked that --

... there is an artistic convention which she (Jane Austen) discernibly accepts -- which she would no more despise and ignore than a poet would propose to write a sonnet and produce eleven lines of irregular verse ending in the middle of a sentence. This convention is clearly distinguishable from the conventional artifices and false values of the transient, the merely fashionable novels of her own day, to which she reacted in hilarious mockery.⁴⁸

This statement of Miss Lascelles corroborates the standpoint that Jane Austen accepts a 'convention' and yet rebels against 'the merely fashionable novels of her own day'. She does not fall in line with the writers of Sentimental Novel, namely with Sterne, Richardson, and Mrs. Radcliffe (a sensationalist by all means). She stands apart from them in that she is so close to the life around and so alive to the contemporary social problems. In highlighting the problems and dilemmas of her day, especially of womankind, she becomes a writer of social comedies. Her novels, therefore, "do not 'perennialise' society : they problematise it."⁴⁹ No doubt, she is a vigorous commentator on the people and the situations of her society.

Jane Austen may also be regarded as a 'literary rebel' in the sense that she took up her pen at a time when women were not generally encouraged to develop or display their artistic talent. Although Dr. Johnson bestowed his occasional praise on some contemporary female writers, including Miss Austen, he could not alter the existing contemptuous attitude of society towards women in general. Miss Austen went ahead with her onerous task of writing novels, without getting cowed down by the prevailing attitude, and joined the band of such gifted women writers as Hannah More (1745-1833), Fanny Burney (1752-1840), Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849), and Susan Ferrier (1782-1854). Along with these writers, Jane Austen

added a unique tenderness and a typically feminine viewpoint to the corpus of English Fiction. Though Miss Austen can't be claimed to be the first to have introduced these qualities into English Fiction, she is unquestionably the most dominant representative female voice of her time. All credit must go to her for enriching the fiction of England. She deserves compliments for being 'the true image of her time' (as Ben Jonson said of Shakespeare). Mary Corringham has very aptly and poetically described what precisely Miss Austen did in the domain of Fiction :

"I alone was free from women writers' lettered vanity. In its reserve my art was delicate; I did not force, insist, exaggerate."⁵⁰

This poetic passage is put in the mouth of Jane herself, and throws sufficient light on some of the salient features of her art.

CHAPTER - V

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C H A P T E R - VI

CHAPTER-VI

CONCLUSION

Jane Austen may be termed as 'a literacy rebel' only in a limited sense. She is not so in the employment of her content, but in the selection of her form, especially the comic and ironic mode, she remains unique and rebellious. Unquestionably irony is her forte, and the comic mode proves very helpful to her in effective expression of her views about men, women and their manners. Jane stands unique among the 18th and early 19th century novelists in the use of these effective tools, which were hardly tried by her predecessors.

As we know, the history of English fiction begins with Daniel Defoe, who generally wrote remarkably realistic stories, and who subordinated character to plotstructure. No doubt, after 1740 A.D., some emphasis was laid on characterization, as one can deduce from the papers of Addison and Steele, who wonderfully created characters like Sir Rogerde Coverly, Will Wimble, and others. But Addison and Steele were not writing novels with equal emphasis on plot. However, Swift's Gulliver's Travels is a remarkable exception as an imaginative piece of artistic work, wherein we find a good deal of satirical portraiture.

In the eighteenth century, English fiction was carried forward by a number of gifted writers like Richardson, Yielding, Sterne, Smollett, and Oliver Goldsmith. A number of women novelists were very active in this age, and we may mention a few names here like Mrs. Ann Radcliffe, Miss Clara Reeve, Miss Fielding, Fanny Burney, Maria Edgeworth, Susan Farrier, and above all Jane Austen. The rise of the woman writers on the literary horizon of England is a welcome development at this time, and Jane contributed her mite in the growth of a peculiarly feminine novel. Those who wrote novels immediately before Jane Austen - like Richardson and Sterne,

in particular - were mostly concerned with morality, virtues, vices and sentiments. Richardson's Pamela and Sterne's Tristram Shandy are primarily sentimental and impressionistic novels. Fielding continued the realistic strain of Defoe in his Tom Jones and Amelia. Smollett gave us the picaresque novels like Roderick Random and Peregrine Pickle, while Oliver Goldsmith wrote the domestic novel, The Vicar of Wakefield. Another variety of fiction was cultivated with great care and skill by Mrs. Radcliffe, Horace Walpole, Gregory Lewis, and William Beckford, in whose hands the scenes of horror, murders and violence came to dominate.

Jane Austen, who started writing her novels towards the close of the eighteenth century and who continued her job till the first quarter of the nineteenth century, stands apart from many of these writers. Neither does she resort to mere conceptualization of certain virtues and vices (as Richardson and Sterne did), nor she practises the blood-curdling stories of horror and violence (as the writers of the Gothic and Oriental romances -- Mrs. Radcliffe and Walpole -- did). Very adroitly she mentions this fact in Chapter XI, VIII of her novel, Mansfield Park : "Let other pens dwell on guilt and misery. I quit such odious subjects as soon as I can, impatient to restore everybody, not greatly in fault themselves, to tolerable comfort, and to have done with all the rest."¹ Jane is perfectly right in choosing her own subjects of love and marriage, with which she is very well acquainted. These are the subjects that fit in the narrow range of her art, which has been branded as 'two inches of ivory'.

I. Austen : A Novelist of Personal Integrity Rather Than a Camp-follower

Miss Austen was not a Camp-follower in the practice of her art. A 'Camp-follower' is by nature inventive and innovative; he generally sets a new line or pattern of

approach for his artistic creations. Jane Austen was not so in her writing; she rather chose to look within and evolved a method or pattern of writing which suited her best. In doing so, she heard the voice of her 'inner self', and responded to it with all her main and might. As started earlier, the comic and ironic (or satiric) mode of expression helped her immensely in saying the unsayable and in explaining the inexplicable. The mode was of great value to her for conveying her feelings and thoughts, which tended to be subtle and complex at times. Her persistent pursuit of this mode enabled her to catch the subtle nuances of characters and create 'fools' like William Shakespeare. Richard Simpson has rightly pointed out that in creating her comic characters, Jane "has quite caught the knack of Shakespeare."² They form "a natural class" of characters. Sampson further suggests that Jane's "wisest personages have some dash of folly in them, and her least wise have something to love."³ Thus, Darcy John Dashwood, Capt. Wentworth, to cite just a few names, are wise men, but they suffer from pride, trickery or delayed decisions (which become their 'folly'). On the contrary, the stupid and ignorant persons like Henry Crawford and his sister, Mrs. Norris, Miss Thorpe and the young Thorpe, Miss Bates, and Mrs. Elton, have something in them to please us (at least they do not hurt us, for they are deep in the mire of ignorance and lack of proper understanding). These characters have in them "much of the element of farce"⁴ and burlesque. Jane's later novels - Mansfield Park, Emma and Persuasion, - have, however, become soberer in nature her earlier works. It may be due to the maturity of Jane's mind or to the knowledge of the people and the world acquired by her through the years. In Sanditon, her puckish humour returns, to her and she successfully creates the romantic Sir Edward, who is fed on Burns and Byron and Shelley.

George Henry Lewes was the first critic to discuss Jane Austen as an artist in her own right in his brilliant

article, "The Novels of Jane Austen", which appeared in Blackwood's Magazine (July 1859). In his article, Lewes followed the main lines of appreciation that Sir Walter Scott had laid down. Scott's review of *Emma* was published in the Quarterly Review, October 1815, and he intelligently pointed out the contrast between the romantic novel of incident (which was in vogue till then) and the new kind of fiction which had grown up during the lat fifteen or twenty years. The latter new kind of novel was practised by Jane Austen, who attached importance to the portrayal of ordinary life, to the creation of subtle characters, and to the display of 'depth of knowledge and dexterity of execution'. Scott admires her naturalness and realistic details, and adds further :

The author's knowledge of the world, and the peculiar tact with which she presents characters that the reader cannot fail to recognize, reminds us something of the merits of the Flemish school of painting.⁵ Though Scott himself belonged to the tradition of the romantic novel, he was not diffident in appreciating something new and naturalistic.

Six years later, Richard Whately analysed Jane's Peculiar kind of realism and defined it as dramatic. He particularly admired "her discrimination of character."⁶ The noted scholar, Rachel Trickett in an illuminating article, has correctly penned down thus : "... we may find ourselves comparing her to Shakespeare and Moliere, for her achievement is not really related to any period, but to an attitude of mind, a type of genius which naturally expresses itself in the ageless form of comedy."⁷

As a novelist, Jane Austen remains faithful to herself as well as to her social environment. She never tries to step out of her self-imposed restrictions, asserting thereby the integrity of her artistic personality. Being the daughter of a clegyman, she shows a prosperity for moral aspects of her characters. Her limited knowledge of men, women and their

behaviour is enough to draw characters of moral values or otherwise, for both the good and the bad figure in her novels. There is nothing that escapes her observant eye, and nothing that baffles her mind.

In Jane's ethics, taste and sense and virtue are the three main elements. She likes sensible persons of good breeding, who keep their feelings controlled, they are both men and women. She hates vulgarity, deception, and folly in human beings. Only a writer of aesthetic taste and good culture alone can do so. She is particularly interested in good manners and gentle behaviour, and exposes those who lack in these qualities. Her satire stands her in good stead. She sometimes makes her characters reveal themselves through their actions and speeches. The dramatic nature of her dialogue helps a good deal in building her characters and plots.

Jane's style is a true index of her method of presentation, it is of great value in the portrayal of characters. It also reveals herself-- her mind and psychology over a particular event or person. The words she uses are of good weight and meaning. She weighs them properly before she uses them. She does not hesitate to correct them if better words are found. It appears, she has cultivated a refined sense of using pleasing rhythm and cadence in her sentences.

Jane remains loyal to her own perceptions and sensibilities. It is not easy to read her mind through some of the dominant female characters, though the poor heroines, yet morally upright, reflect her own financial position. The beauty and charm of some of them may also be read as an index of the critic. But this kind of reading of her mind or psychology must be done with a good deal of care and attention. The reason is that she has created characters of diverse natures and habits. It is somewhat difficult to decide how many of them are drawn after the authoress or how many are not: What is of great satisfaction to us is that she maintains a laudable reserve in both life and letters, and that she does

not violate the norms of art and life imposed upon herself. Such an authoress should be approached with open mind and heart.

II. The Significance of Jane Austen in the Vast Realm of Literature

Jane Austen occupies almost the same position in English fiction of the early nineteenth century as Shakespeare does in the Elizabethan drama. There is nothing 'loud or garish' in her to catch the casual glance. In the words of the noted literary historian, Edward Albert, "The taste for this kind of fiction has to be acquired, but once it is acquired it remains strong. Jane Austen has won her way to a foremost place, and she will surely keep it."⁸ She has been able to reach the pride of place by virtue of her minute observation of person, places and things her faithful portrayal of the middle-class English gentry, and her well-wrought plots and well-directed narratives. She writes her novels out of her own experience of the people and their life around her. She hardly ever attempts to depict characters and incidents from an alien land. It is to her credit that she always keeps within the bounds of her knowledge and experience.

W.L. Cross rightly remarks that Jane Austen is 'the greatest English novelist because of the queenliness of her craftsmanship, purity and simplicity of style and themes.'

III. The Development of the English Novel

Charlotte Bronte complains that passions are 'perfectly unknown' to Jane, whose business is more with the human eyes, mouth, hands and feet than with the human heart. But even Charlotte concedes that Jane possesses "precisely a talent for observation."⁹ While Charlotte's charge carries some truth in it, but D.H. Lawrence's is totally unwarranted and uncalled for. The latter designates Jane as 'bad, mean and snobbish',

for he does not find the kind of human relationships he is looking for. Mark Twain, the great American novelist, also does not like "the stiffness and propriety of her (Jane's) characters."¹⁰ It is certain that Twain's animus leads him to align her with the Calvinist-Puritan tradition in America, - a tradition with which he is always angry. Clearly, Twain advocates a different kind of fiction, which should be spontaneous, natural and elemental, but Jane champions the opposite forces in writing. As contrasted to the adverse views of Lawrence and Twain, the opinion of Henry James is a mixed one in regard to Jane. James thinks that what is 'saleable' in her case becomes what is 'tasteful', and he deprecates the commercial considerations in the rise of her popularity. But earlier, the same Tanes had ranked Jane with Shakespeare, Cervantes and Fielding, as a 'fine painter of life.'

The adversaries of Jane Austen, have been paid in their own coin by Rudyard Kipling, R.W. Chapman, and F.R. Leavis. These writers and scholars have recognized her as Jane's precursor in literary technique. Leavis is all praise for the technique of Emma, where 'everything is presented through Emma's dramatized consciousness.' It is true that the opinion of the critical and literary world has undergone a dramatic change in the twentieth century. The authors of the socalled Bloomsbury Group were warm admirers of the eighteenth century view of life, and they attached great value to wit, style, restrain, reason, scepticism, and perfection of art - the literary qualities which they witnessed largely in Miss Austen. In this regard, it may be mentioned that Catherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf were great admirers of Jane's art. And E.M. Forster particularly praises Jane's organization of characters; she organizes them in such a masterly fashion that they are faithfully related to their environment and to one another. Forster points out that Jane is a consummate artist to have created 'round' or three-dimensional characters (and not 'flat' or 'wooden' characters). Possibly there is a kind of artistic affinity between Jane and Forster. Both Jane

and Forster "attempt to reconcile the claims of the head and the hearts, and indeed make that conflict a central issue in their novels."¹² In an interview given in 1953 and published in the Paris Review. Forster tells us that he 'learned the possibilities of domestic humour' from Jane Austen.

Apart from creative writers, several critics and scholars have added to the growing popularity of Miss Austen in our age. In 1911, A.C. Bradley wrote a perceptive essay on her, pointing out the intimate relationship between her irony and her narrative point of view. In July 1917, Reginald Farrier published his essay on Jane in the Quarterly Review and expressed the view that Emma was her supreme achievement. Dr. R.W. Chapinan brought out most of his works on or by Jane in the Twenties. His edition of her six novels appeared in 1923, and of her letters in 1932, and of her juvenilia and fragmentary works in 1932 and 1951. No doubt, Dr. Chapman was a devoted Janeite himself.¹³

Another scholar Edwin Muir in his book. The Structure of the Novel (1928) thinks highly of Jane Austen. Muir conceived his book on the pattern of Forster's Aspects of the Novel, and treated Miss Austen as 'the first novelist who practised (her dramatic art) with consummate success in England'. But it was not till 1939 that the first book length critical study of Jane Austen appeared in London; it was Mary Lascelles' Jane Austen and Her Art. Apart from these studies of Jane Austen, there is the essay of the psychologist D.W. Harding -- "Regulated Hatred : An Aspect of the Work of Jane Austen" (1940)-- on the Freudian lines. Geoffrey Gorer's essay on "The Myth in Jane Austen" (1941) follows the lead of Harding in psychological interpretation. And David Daiches essay, "Jane Austen, Karl Marx, and the Aristocratic Dance" (1948), highlights the novelist's attitude to economic matters. Mark Schorer and a few other scholars fall in line with Daiches. A full-length book entitled Jane Austen: Irony as Defence and Discovery (1952) by Marvin Mudrick highlights the use of irony for exposing the faults and foibles of characters and for contrasting the reality with idealism. Lionell Trilling wrote

several essays on Miss Austen's novels and his views on Mansfield Park and Emma are of special interest to us because these two works are poles' apart from Pride and Prejudice and others in that they tend to be explicitly moral and didactic in plot and characterization. Writing of Mansfield Park, Trilling observes in the following manner :

Mansfield Park is an extraordinary novel, and only Jane Austen could have achieved its profound and curious interest, but its moral tone is antipathetic to contemporary taste... But Emma, as richly complex as Mansfield Park, arouses no such antagonism...¹⁴

Though Emma is not so moralistic or didactic as Mansfield Park, it also brings into sharp focus certain good and bad qualities of human beings and thereby becomes principle-oriented and idyllic. Professor Trilling has this truth in mind when he remarks : "So in Emma Jane Austen contrives an idyllic world, or the closest approximation of an idyllic world that the genre of the novel will permit, and brings into contrast with it the actualities of the social world, of the modern self."¹⁵ It is likely that Jane Austen is vulnerable on one or the other count, but she never fails to present the real pictures of human life : she is idyllic or idealistic or moralistic only on certain specific occasions. Jane Austen is a popular novelist today. Sir Scott and many others' appreciation of her fictional art and many others' appreciation of her fictional art and characterization has not gone wasted. The Jane-industry has become an ever-increasing industry. Several serious studies have appeared on her during the past thirty or forty years. Some such studies are : Andrew H. Wright's Jane Austen's Novels (1953), Christopher Gillie's A Preface to Jane Austen (1974), Douglas Bush's Jane Austen (1945), Margaret Kirkham's Jane Austen, Feminism and Fiction (1983), and Tony Tanner's Jane Austen (1986). They are all very relevant and illuminating studies of Jane Austen, presenting her in their chosen colours and attitudes. Wright's work makes

a through probe into the writer's methods of narration and styles; it also throws light on Jane's themes and materials. Gullie's book serves as a pertinent guide to the uninitiate and the general reader. Bush's critical study largely dwells on Jane's novels -- both complete and incomplete ones -- and offers very useful commentary on them. Kirkham's attempt is to highlight Jane and her novels from a feminist point of view, -- a view that has assumed greater significance in the presentday world because of the political, social and financial awareness of the womankind. Tanner's book throws light on Jane Austen's art, society, education and language in the Introductory part, and then moves on to individual novels. It takes into account Sanditon too.

Leaving aside Jane's memories and biographical studies, one may also mention Dr. Chapman's Jane Austen : A Critical Bibliography (1953), which is very useful to scholars and researchers. Similarly, Mary Evan's Jane Austen and the State (1987) is a highly pertinent study of the political and socio-economic developments that took place in Jane's time. How far they affected the life of the authoress is a relevant question that every reader of Miss Austen must know. Obviously, there is no end to the series of studies on a writer who has become so popular and respected in the twentieth century.

In her book, Jane Austen and the War of Ideas (1975), Marilyn Butler makes a stimulating and informative contextual study. Her later book, Romantis, Rebels and Reaction : English Literature and its Background (1981), discusses the complex relationship between literary Romanticism and revolutionary politics. It also discusses the feminist controversy which finds a room in Jane's novels.

The distinguished critic, F.R. Leavis, places Jane Austen on a high pedestal. In The Great Tradition (1948), Leavis considers her as the inaugurator of 'the great tradition' of nineteenth century fiction of moral and social concerns. True, Jane's moral interest was "a feminist one,"¹⁶

and this interest was not shared by George Eliot, Henry James, or Conrad Atkin. Her view of English society was largely based on her own observation, and her ethics were essentially secular and utilitarian. She did not like that money to be the basis of marriage, for this promoted a dowry of so many thousand pounds to purchase a husband and an establishment.

We have so far examined the views of creative and critical people about Jane Austen and her significance in the vast realm of English literature. Though some of them do not like her mode of writing, they all agree in one thing at least -- that her popularity has increased through the years. Her growing popularity is a sure sign of her significance as a novelist. Her novels are a source of perennial pleasure for general readers.

IV. Concluding Remarks

Jane Austen may be regarded as a true representative of her age. Historically, she appears "as a kind of connecting link or hinge"¹⁷ in her social attitudes as well as in her art. Her social attitudes do not allow her any undue or uncalled-for feelings for sudden change; they rather strive for a permanence in social order. Permanence, sobriety, wit and humour, irony and satire, the rule of reason over the impulsive dictates of heart : these are some of the salient literary features of Jane's art, just as they are effective weapons in the hands of Dryden and Pope in poetry, and of Swift and Dr. Johnson in prose. With these writers, Jane has had a spiritual affinity. Even those contemporary writers who follow the Romantic tradition, like Walter Scott, recognize her intrinsic merit as a novelist. Moreover, her insistence on 'the voice of the individual' in the matter of love and marriage looks forward to the artistic practice of the great Romantics. Though she does not permit her heroines to be swayed away by pomp and show, or by romantic illusions, she does not restrict them from exercising their individual liberty and discernment in the choice of their life-partners. In reality Jane is not so much opposed to "individualism" as to false "egoism"¹⁸ in her social comedies. 'Individualism'

offers us a sense of dignity and identity, whereas 'egoism' leads to undesirable passions (pride, anger, vainglory, pomposity, vulgarity etc.) and romantic excesses.

A re-assessment of Jane Austen must take into account the social environment in which she lived and wrote. It was an environment that imposed restrictions of decorum and demeanour on writers like her, and she never endeavoured to violate those restrictions. Instead, she accepted all the limitations of her sex, and portrayed the human world -- men and women and their personal relationships -- with utter sincerity and simplicity. She highlighted the manifold dilemmas and problems of womankind with all her fire and fury. Scholars have rightly pointed out the narrow range of her knowledge and art, but within that self-chosen narrow range she moved with great skill and artistry. In other words, she turned to good use her paucity of experience and smallness of range. Her limitations allowed her time and energy to bring out chiselled portraiture of human life. Her plots and characters are the finished products of art. It is desirable to approach her novels, with an open mind. No inhibitive approach will be able to present her novels and art in a proper perspective. The noted scholar, Andrew H. Wright rightly remarks at the close of his book, Jane Austen's Novels (1953), that we should read and enjoy her novels with no pre-conceived notions : "One recourse, and it is a pleasant one, is to read the novels themselves, bearing in mind the 'transparent vesture' (as Thirlwall says in another connexion) which... is responsible for Jane Austen's front rank among the English novelists."¹⁹ It is wothwhile to remember that Miss Austen died at the age of forty-two only, and at the height of her powers. Her early death is definitely regrettable, yet her fictional works are of lasting value. 'Change is the law of Nature', but it does not affect her art or her finished works. And 'changelessness' is another name of 'permanence', which Jane Austen enjoys amply today and will continue to enjoy in the days to come.

This study is undertaken with the explicit objective of establishing the claims of Miss Austen as a 'permanent' artist of great charm and appeal. For a judicious assessment of Jane, 'the moralist' should not be allowed to interfere with 'the artist'. Morality and art are two separate issues, and they must be kept apart in a fair and unbiased judgement of this writer.

CHAPTER-VI

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